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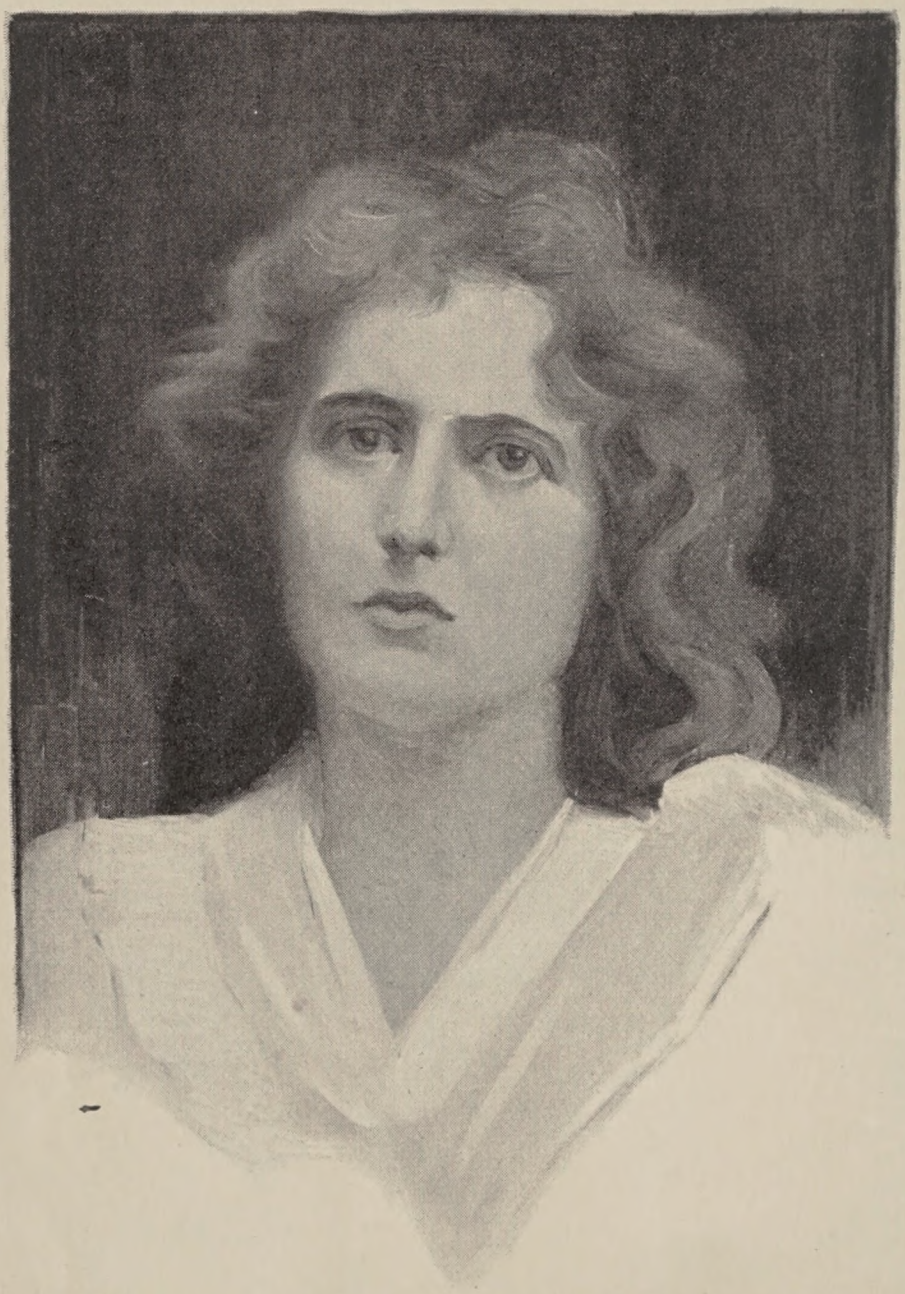

KATHERINE MONTRESSOR.

Would Any Man?

by

Charles Peale Didier

author of

'Twixt Cupid and Croesus, etc.

WITH NINE FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY THE AUTHOR.

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Would Any Man?

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Twixt Cupid and Croesus, $1.50 NET.

New York Sun—"A curious book, certainly, is ''Twixt Cupid and Croesus.' One handles what seems to be the actual original correspondence of several persons."

Boston Globe—"All whose hearts are still stirred by the old, old story which is ever new, will welcome ''Twixt Cupid and Croesus.'"

Baltimore Sun—"Seldom has a charming story of fiction been told in a more unique, novel and artistic manner."

New Haven Evening Register—"A more unique love story than that just issued by the well-known artist, Chas. P. Didier, would be hard to find. The story is attractively illustrated."

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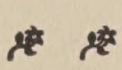

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The Philadelphia Press—"Text and illustrations have both spirit and finish and merit not always found in such works, with intimate connections between the reading matter and the picture. They are good pictures to look at and an entertaining story to go with them."

Would Any Man?

CHAP. I.

Ten miles or more to the west of one of the most important towns in Virginia, set some-what back from, and overlooking, the banks of the James river, stands what was one of the finest Colonial mansions of that once glorious old State.

A huge trunk of ivy, which is nearly as old as the building itself, has put forth its countless branches clinging to the time-stained walls and twining caressingly around the broken windows as if to conceal the ruin and neglect within.

According to an inscription, graven deeply into the corner-stone of moss-covered granite, what remains of this noble structure has

weathered the storms of more than seven-score years and ten, and even to the present day its walls are scarred but little, and only the woodwork shows the vandal hand of Time.

As it stands, in its stricken grandeur, with its massive pillars of stone extending to the roof, like great sentinels guarding its entrance, its queer shaped windows, with their diamond panes and gruesome cornices, its wide porticos, and many acres of rich and fertile soil, it seems to dwell on by-gone days of powdered hair and minuet, when our dainty grandmamas, with their quaint short-waisted gowns, were wooed and won within its walls, or perhaps under some secluded bower, fragrant and sweet with the delicate odor of overhanging jessamine.

And the river, as it flows along, seems to question as it passes, Why, O noble manor, are you so deserted, what stain has blighted your fair history, what curse has stricken and left you desolate in your old age?

So the old place stands, abandoned, and uncared for. Its grounds are seldom entered, and overgrown with weeds; its noble oaks have fallen here and there, and every thing around presents a scene of abject desolation.

* * * * * * *

One morning, eight years or more before the opening of this chapter, a young girl was leaning against one of the stone pillars which have been mentioned. Her head was slightly inclined, her expression one of mingled resignation and despair, an expression which sorrow alone can produce on the countenance of a true and noble nature. She wore a simple gown of black material, trimmed with crape, showing her tall, graceful figure to advantage.

Here she stood trying to collect her thoughts,—trying, but failing utterly. Her sorrow had taken complete possession of her and was weighing her down like a mighty mountain. Her brain was dead to every thought, except the one, that her mother, her own dear mother, had gone forever.

She had been here but a few moments, when she was startled by the sound of footsteps in the hall behind her. With a shudder of abhorrence, she turned to confront the newcomer.

He was a man of about fifty years of age, tall and slender, with hair and moustache of an iron grey color, slightly bent in the shoulders, and his eyes, which were small and very dark, were sharp and restless.

His teeth, which he was continually displaying, owing to a much indulged in smile—looking anything but human—were very white and regular. On the whole he was what is called aristocratic looking, but one whom a keen observer would have mistrusted.

"Good morning, Katherine," he said, with affected cordiality. "I am glad to see you. It has been sometime since you have condescended to vouchsafe me the honor of your company. This is the first time, I believe, since the funeral of your departed mother. I trust, I was not conspicuous by my absence,

and that there were no hitches in the ceremony. It would have looked better, perhaps, if I had been present, but I have always had the greatest antipathy for funerals, they are tiresome, to say the least, and then, too, I had an engagement in town that morning, and couldn't possibly have been back in time."

The girl gave him a look of contempt, and turned to pass through the doorway.

"Not yet," he said insinuatingly, taking a few steps backward to block the way, "I am off for New York to-night, and it is natural that I should want to enjoy your company while I can."

The girl saw that resistance was useless, and sank heavily down on a rustic bench, by the side of the door.

"There are several things I want to speak to you about this morning," he continued, rubbing his hands as he spoke, "only trifles at present, but I will have something of much more import in the near future. Your mother had some handsome jewels, a diamond brooch

among them, which doubtless you remember very well. I would like to have them. Do you know where they are ?"

"I do," the girl answered slowly.

"Well, I should like to have them reset, for a friend of mine, whom they will become much more than they ever did your mother. Kindly get them at once."

"I do not quite understand you," the girl said, rousing herself and looking up into his face, with an expression of half fear, half wonder.

"I can't see that it is at all necessary that you should, but to satisfy your curiosity, I will tell you. I intend having the stones reset in New York, to give to a very dear friend of mine, against whom your mother has doubtless tried to prejudice you."

"I should think," Katherine replied, now fully convinced of his intention, "that you would have the decency not to mention that woman in my presence, especially at such a time as this. As to my mother's jewels, her

father's presents to her, I will never give them up for such a purpose, never!"

"How very dramatic. Really, Katherine, you are endowed with a number of talents. They should all be cultivated, they should indeed. Your sentiment is something beautiful, too, but it does not pay in this enlightened century. You should learn to look at life from a more practical standpoint. It is about time you were giving up your foolish illusions, and taking things as they come. "That woman," as it pleased you to style her a few moments ago, will, before many weeks, be my wife, and the mistress of this place. And you will have to treat her as such. Do you understand ?"

"I think you forget," the girl said, in a calm tone, born of self-restraint, "that this place and all his property, was, at my mother's death, by my grandfather's will, to belong to me. Do you not think that I should be consulted somewhat as to the management of it ?"

"We'll see about that later," Richard Montressor said, with a confident smile. "We'll see about that. Wills are often misinterpreted and very easily broken. I think your grandfather's will prove itself as brittle as a good many others in the past."

The girl looked at him wonderingly. An undercurrent of assurance in his threat puzzled her. She knew him to be too much of a diplomat to threaten unless he was sure of winning in the end, and yet, how, or in any way, he could have a will set aside which had stood for ten years or more was incomprehensible to her. Had her mind been free of grief, she might have given his words more thought, but as it was, they made but little impression.

"However, we will let that matter rest for a while," he continued. "What I wish to know now is, where are those jewels? I would like to take them with me, and have no time to bandy words with you;" and looking at his watch, "I have some business in town,

it is time I was off. I ask again, will you get them or not ?"

"I have told you," Katherine replied, in a very determined tone, "once and for all, I will not."

"Oh, very well have it your own way this time, but I think you will regret it, I do indeed," he said in his usual suave manner, but in a tone which the girl knew contained much latent wrath.

"I will not be back for several days," he continued. "On my return, I will have some matters of much more importance to talk to you about. I hope my absence will prove of much benefit to your health, and that you will sufficiently recover to talk reasonably. I say reasonably, but I think, rationally is more fitting; the former could hardly be expected of any woman."

So saying, he descended the steps, got into his buggy, and hardly giving his servant time to seat himself beside him, he gave the horse a sharp cut with the whip, and dashed down the road which led to town.

The girl rose wearily, like one who has been dazed by a sudden blow, and giving him a glance of mingled dread and loathing, turned and walked into the house.

With slow and languid step, she ascended the broad stairs at the back of the hall. The slanting rays of the morning sun, pouring in through the large stained glass window which crossed the recess at the head of the first landing, threw a mellow glow of color around her sombre figure, and then passed on to touch into life and brilliancy the portraits of her ancestors which had been hanging for many years on the walls below.

When she reached the landing her artistic nature prompted her to turn and look back to see the effect of light and color. However stricken by grief and misery she was, she yearned to return to her painting, and there find something to absorb and occupy her mind.

The soft rays fell obliquely across the pictures, bringing out in bold relief one of their

number—that of her grandfather Faulkner, her mother's father. His was a lovable, kind old face, surmounted with long silvery locks combed back from a high, noble forehead. What a contrast, she thought, to the man she recognized as her father. The portrait seemed so life-like, looking out at her with its kind grave eyes, that she almost cried out to it for help, as she had done so often to the original in her childhood days, and never without success.

"Oh!" she thought bitterly, "if he only had lived, that brute would never have killed my mother by his cruelty, and torture me as he does."

She stood for some moments watching the portrait, until the light which illumined it shifted its position, and the canvas was left sombre and colorless.

"How like my life," she thought sorrowfully, "the light has passed, and left it dark and shadowed."

CHAP. II.

Richard Montressor had come to this country from England when a young man, with the making of a much coveted fortune in view, but, like many of his kinsmen, he had found it to be a more difficult matter than he had first supposed.

Many schemes were entered into by him, but they all waned into failure. Finally, with the slight means left him he purchased a small tract of land in Virginia, with the intention of stock-farming, but with little knowledge of that pursuit. Being at that time a man of prepossessing appearance, courteous manners and of considerable outward refinement, it is not to be wondered at that the doors of Southern hospitality were soon thrown wide open to him. He readily succeeded in gaining *entre* to the best families of the locality; and it was at her father's house he met Mary Faulkner, the mother of the girl we have seen; and an only and idolized child.

Naturally supposing that she would some day inherit her father's large estate, Montressor lost no time in laying siege to her heart, which he became most anxious to possess after he had searched the records of the county court and ascertained the amount of property shown there to her father's credit.

It was not long before Mary Faulkner, romantic and at a susceptible age, found herself in love with the young Englishman, or rather imagined herself to be, which suited his purpose equally as well.

Mr. Faulkner, however, being a keener observer of what is called character than his daughter, bitterly opposed the attentions of young Montressor, and not until a space of two years had elapsed did he reluctantly give his consent to their marriage. One child, Katherine, was born of this marriage, and it was for her sake that Mr. Faulkner tolerated the later conduct of his son-in-law and allowed him to remain under his roof, for, after Montressor was thoroughly convinced of the fact that his wife's father would make almost any

sacrifice rather than scandal should be connected with those of his blood, he plunged into all kinds of dissipation and showed himself as he really was.

He wilfully and openly neglected his young wife, and subjected her to the grossest insults in the presence of strangers. He even went so far as to boast among his profligate companions, that should the estate ever come under his control he would find the means of getting the most of it into his possession, divorce his wife, and bring to the Manor a new mistress, in the person of one who had long since held that position to him.

For years Mrs. Montressor bore her husband's infidelities and cruelty without a murmur, for the sake of her daughter and in order that the last years of her father's life might be as free as possible from care and trouble.

After the death of Mr. Faulkner, when it was found that the income from his estate was all his daughter could control—the entire property being entailed for the granddaughter, absolutely—Montressor plunged

into dissipation even more deeply than he had in the past. His insatiate demands and ever accumulating debts were a constant drain on his wife's income, of which, although it was large, there was scarcely enough left to maintain the Manor.

For five years longer, Mrs. Montressor's constitution gradually weakened under her husband's brutal conduct, which then scarcely knew any bounds, there being no one to check it. She made a brave and pitiable struggle, but at last her shattered health gave way and, after a lingering illness of some months, she died.

Katherine was at this time in the twenty-second year of her age. She had inherited all the earlier beauty of her mother without her delicate constitution. Her tall majestic figure showed grace and strength in every movement and gave evidence of the healthy out-door life which she had led since her earliest childhood.

Her face, surrounded by a wealth of deep brown hair, was beautiful in its strength of

line and clear complexion. Her eyes were large and sad, her mouth was firm yet sweet and contained lines indicating much force of character and purpose.

Since she had been able to appreciate the cause of her mother's distress and failing health, all her natural love for the man she recognized as her father had ceased. And with advancing years, what at first had been disgust and loathing, ripened into hatred. She despised him with as much fervor as she loved the woman against whom he directed his brutalities.

That Mr. Montressor's conduct toward his wife had long since crushed out all filial love for him was no secret, and consequently there was much speculation as to how he would fare at the hands of his daughter, who was known to be of much sterner mould than her mother.

During his absence, Katherine's time was largely taken up by the painful duty of getting her mother's things together, and with the

aid of Mandy, her old negro nurse, packing them in the chests which had stood for many a year in the garrets of the Manor. The rings and smaller articles of value, she took to her own room and placed under lock and key. In going through an accumulation of old letters, she found a small package daintily tied with white ribbon and marked on the top in her mother's handwriting "D. K., who died in India in 1874." She opened the package and took from it a miniature, exquisitely painted and framed in a gold locket, after the old style.

It was a portrait of a man about thirty years of age, with regular features, dark eyes and a thick suit of brown hair. Katherine examined it closely. She wondered who the original could have been; she knew of no one in the family with those initials, and yet the face seemed strangely familiar. It was queer, she thought, that her mother, knowing how interested she was in all works of art, should never have shown this beautifully executed

thing to her. She studied it a while, then turned it over, and found engraved on the back of the locket "To Mary Hollingsworth Faulkner, the only woman I ever loved." She placed it back again in its box, with a sigh, and continued her work of straightening the desk. When she had about completed her task she turned to gather up some papers which she had put on the top of the dressing table beside her. In so doing, she caught a glimpse of her own features in the mirror. Again she took the miniature from its box and stood before the glass, glancing from the painting to her own reflection and vice versa.

Hearing the wheels of a carriage coming up the road which led to the house, she quickly placed the box and its contents in the desk. She then closed in the shutters quickly, gathered up her bundle of torn letters, locked the door and tip-toed back to her own room. She had been there but a short time when a knock came on the door. On being bidden, her old nurse entered.

"What is it, Mandy?" Katherine asked, seeing the old negress somewhat agitated and nervous, "a message from my father, I suppose?"

"Ya's miss, it are miss, he say he's cum back, miss, an' want to see you."

"Oh, very well; you can tell him I'll be down directly."

"Miss Katherine, cawn't you cum now? I's skeered to go back. He seem powerful cross dis evenin'."

Katherine could not help smiling at Mandy's terrified expression, but said nothing, for she never encouraged the slightest disrespect in the servants towards her father, and avoided as much as possible any scenes in their presence.

She quickly changed her gown and, leaving Mandy to straighten her room, went down to the library, to be as civil as possible under the circumstances.

Mr. Montressor was reclining in a large arm chair, smoking a cigar. He did not hear

Katherine until she had passed well into the room, but seemed to be lost in thought, which, judging from his clouded brow, was not of the most agreeable nature. Becoming aware of her presence, he rose and advanced to meet her.

"I am glad to see you, Katherine," he said with an attempt at an affectionate tone.

The girl drew back and inclined her head slightly.

"You sent for me," she said coldly.

"Yes," he replied, motioning her to a chair as he spoke. "I have something to say to you, but before I do so, I would like to tell you that I am exceedingly sorry that I spoke to you as I did before leaving. The fact of the matter is, I was much worried at the time and spoke more harshly than I intended, and, too, you irritate me, Katherine; you do, indeed."

"In what way?" she asked calmly.

"In many," he replied. "You do not show me proper respect, nor do you ever seem to have the slightest regard for my wishes."

"And have you for mine?" she asked, looking straight into his evil, treacherous face. "When have you ever considered me in any possible way? What right have you, or has any parent, to bring children into the world and torture them as you do me? It is surely the father's duty to make the daughter's life, which he is responsible for, what it should be, at least so far as it is in his power to do so."

"And is it not," he broke in insinuatingly, "the duty of a daughter to honor and obey her father?"

"When the father merits such from the daughter, only," the girl said bitterly. "When respect is commanded it is usually shown."

"Well," he said, curbing his rising anger, for he had a game to play, "we'll let bygones be bygones, and see if there cannot be peace between us in the future. My reason for sending for you is this," he continued after a short pause: before going to New York I stopped in town for a few hours, and there happened to run across Mr. Saunders, the lawyer, who

you know was appointed by the court to administer on your mother's estate. He tells me that it is necessary, before he can go any further, for you to sign a paper which he gave me. By so doing you will avoid any further delay and a great deal of trouble to yourself in the future." He paused for a second or two; then continued carelessly, "you may sign or not, as suits you best. I am sure you will acquit me of any undue interest in the matter, as you well know I was not even mentioned in your grandfather's will except in an insulting way, and that his entire property was left to your mother in trust for you."

"What is the nature of the paper?" the girl asked suspiciously.

"None in particular," he replied with affected carelessness. "It is merely a brief required by the court, yet necessary before further proceedings. Shall I read it to you?"

"I won't trouble you," she said stiffly, but if you will be so kind as to permit me I will read it for myself."

She sat for some moments eagerly scanning the paper, which, owing to its many legal phrases and purposely twisted ones, she could not understand.

"And why," she asked, glancing up at him, "is your name mentioned here?"

"For a very obvious reason," he replied, "which is this: the State supposes the husband and wife to hold an undivided interest in the property of one another. The paper which you hold in your hand is merely to show that the estate which has come to you was never your mother's absolutely, but held by her in trust for you and in no way subject to my control. I do not wish," he continued in a suave manner, "to influence you in the slightest against your judgment; you asked for information, I gave it."

The lies he uttered came so quickly in response to her questions, and with so little hesitancy on his part, that she, weary and broken by grief as she was, and anxious to leave his presence, gave his words more credence than

she would have otherwise done. She rose slowly as one in doubt, and reseated herself at his desk nearby.

"Where is the proper place for my name?" she asked, wearily.

"Fortunes are not taken care of without some trouble," he said with an attempt at flippancy. "I fear you will find yours more of a burden than you would suppose." He then bent and indicated the information she desired with one long thin finger.

The girl made no reply, but hesitated for a moment, while she re-read the portion of the paper in which his name appeared. She then selected a pen with which to make herself a pauper, and give him—diabolical scoundrel that he was—the power to crush her, and to bring to the Manor the cause of his frequent visits to New York, and make her his wife or continue to keep her his mistress, as it best suited him.

As he stood behind her chair, awaiting anxiously the culmination of his infamous plot, his face took on an expression that was fiend-

ish in the extreme. All the devil that was in him shone forth in his evil countenance at that moment.

Intent on his wickedness, and eager to get the paper into his possession, he stood with hawk-like eyes riveted on the place for her signature, and entirely unmindful of the position of the mirror which stood some fifteen feet in front of them.

The girl again hesitated, then reached for the ink which was some little distance away. As she did so she raised her eyes unsuspectingly. The pen dropped from her hand, and she rose to her feet.

"I hardly think I will sign this to-day," she said calmly. "I have no doubt the court will notify me when there is any business to be transacted. I will bid you good afternoon."

As the curtains closed behind her, he threw himself down in his chair with a muttered oath. He was not a man to be thwarted in his schemes. Once determined on some devilish act he would go to any length to carry it

through. He sat for some time until an idea struck him. Wheeling his chair around suddenly, without rising, he unlocked a drawer in the side of his desk. With shaking hands he fumbled through a lot of papers, and at length found the one he wanted, a copy of the will of the late Robert Faulkner. He then leaned back and read it four or five times from beginning to end. Again turning to the desk, he quickly wrote a short note. Calling one of the young negro men he gave it to him, with the orders to hitch up the fastest horse in the stable, and to take the note to town to Mr. Saunders, the lawyer, and bring that gentleman back as fast as the horse could come. By way of encouragement to have his orders strictly and promptly obeyed, he added, "If you are not back here in two hours, I will break every bone in your damned body; do you understand? Off with you, you black scoundrel."

It so happened that Mr. Saunders was in his office when the messenger arrived. He was

busily engaged in working out a case against an insurance company, in which his client, a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion, was suing to recover three times the loss on a miserable stock of boots and shoes which had burned a month or so before very mysteriously.

Mr. Saunders had taken up his profession with but one object in view, and that was to get all the money out of it he could, irrespective of the ways and means; and looking at matters from his point of view, he had done remarkably well. A large fee had been promised him by Richard Montressor if he could, by fair means or foul, get the Faulkner property into his hands, and consequently his countenance fairly beamed for joy when he read the note. He thought only of the rich reward to be received by him for his services, and knew they would not be needed unless his client meant immediate action.

After dismissing the very much wronged boot and shoe dealer, having made an engage-

ment to take up his case that evening again, Mr. Saunders took a handful of fine cigars, from a box which he kept only for clients whose cases represented any sum from a thousand dollars up; put a small volume containing some recent and important decisions of the Orphans' Court into his pocket and drove to the Manor at breakneck speed with the messenger.

Three hours later Mr. Montressor was left in his private office in a much more easy frame of mind, having been assured that the case in question was a very simple one indeed, and that there would not be the slightest difficulty about it, not the slightest.

CHAP. III.

As Katherine was about to start out the next afternoon in search of some interesting bit of nature to reproduce on her canvas, the message that her father wanted to see her in his office on important business at once was brought to her room.

She found him seated by his desk, making a pretense at reading a newspaper. She recognized at a glance that there was a storm ahead, and determined to avoid it if possible.

"I am glad to see," he began in his natural sneering tone as she entered, "that you have some little respect for my wishes, and have come so promptly."

The girl made no reply, but sank down on the nearest chair at hand.

"I have a matter to speak to you about this afternoon," he continued, "which I assure you

is exceedingly distasteful to me, and I have no doubt that it will prove equally so to you. I will lose no time in coming to the point, however. I do not believe in beating around a matter of this kind, and think the sooner we settle the question the better."

He paused for a short while as if waiting for her to speak, but she said nothing and he continued:

"Your mother and myself were married on the 16th day of January, 1868, which fact more than likely you are very well aware of. If you will refer to the list of births in your grandfather's family Bible you will find that the date of yours, put there by your mother, is April 18th of the following year. You will oblige me by keeping these dates in mind until I finish."

"I have here," he continued, picking up a paper from the desk as he spoke, "a copy of your grandfather's will, which is very concise and clear in its meaning. I will read a clause which bears on the subject in question and

wish you to follow me closely. You will, I think, be able to understand; if not, I will be most happy to explain. Women, I know are often very obtuse about such matters. Before I continue," he said rather abruptly, "I would like to ask you a question: Your mother had a miniature, which was set in an old-fashioned gold locket. Did she ever show it to you?"

"She did not," the girl answered slowly.

"I am not surprised at that," he said with a sneer. "You should find it—I haven't a doubt it is among her things,—and, alter the drawing of the hair and body, you would then have a striking portrait of yourself. However, we will leave that point until a little later."

He then raised the copy of the will from his knee, and read as follows, "I do hereby bequeath, give and devise the income from all property, real, personal, or mixed, which I die possessed of, be it located in this State or elsewhere, to my beloved daughter, Mary Faulkner Montressor; and I furthermore wish it to be distinctly understood that the said income

is to be in no way subject to the debts or control of her husband, Richard Montressor, but is to be paid into her hands and enjoyed by her during her life-time. At her death my entire estate is to go to their daughter, absolutely. Should she not be of age, etc.—"

"I will not go any further," he said, folding the paper and creasing its edges, as he spoke. "What I have read to you will fully serve my purpose."

"I cannot understand what all this means," the girl said wonderingly, "but I have no doubt that it is something infamous. Be kind enough to explain yourself."

"Certainly," he replied, bowing condescendingly, having arisen to his feet. "The whole matter amounts to this, that your grandfather's entire estate by his own will belongs to me."

"The clause I have just read you distinctly says that at your mother's death the property is to go to the daughter of Richard and Mary Montressor. Being no such person and your

mother having left no other near relatives, the estate by the law belongs to me. Do you understand me now?"

"No," the girl said, raising her eyes until they met his, "I most emphatically do not."

"Really, Katherine, you are even more obtuse than I gave you the credit for being. I am sorry, I am indeed, that it is necessary for me to make matters any plainer to you than I have already, but as you insist upon it, I will do so. At the earliest possible moment," he continued with emphasis, "I intend to prove in the courts that the original of the miniature I spoke of is your father; in other words, that your mother was an adulteress."

As quick as a flash the girl sprang to her feet and stood facing her tormentor. All the suppressed hatred of years, born of his cruelty towards her mother and the torture of herself, was by his foul accusation kindled to a white heat.

"Do you mean to tell me," she almost shrieked, "that you intend to drag my pure

mother's name through the filth of a public court, and by perjuring yourself bring disgrace on her sacred memory? Do you mean that, you scoundrel?"

"I mean exactly what I said," he replied in the suavest tone imaginable.

* * * * * * *

That night Katherine heard the old clock on the stairs ring out all the hours. Its deep sonorous tones vibrated in every nook and corner of the spacious hall, and sounded to her fevered imagination like the blows of some huge hammer falling upon the breast of an immense sheet of armor-plate. Sleep was a thing impossible. All night long she tossed restlessly, and seemed to see in the darkness, the evil sneering face of Montressor, as he made his monstrous accusation. The confident tone of triumph in his hateful voice, as he unfolded his diabolical scheme, kept ringing in her ears. She could not down it. Only once, from sheer exhaustion, did she give way to a few moments' restless slumber, but to

wake again with a scream and the full realization of the terrible scene she had gone through that afternoon and what was yet to come.

She prayed, but derived no comfort. God seemed afar off and deaf to all her pleadings in this, her veriest hour of need. It was long after the day had broken on her wretchedness that she succumbed to a sound and merciful sleep,—sweet and blessed relief, if only for the time being, to her well nigh maddened brain.

At this same hour one of the negro servants whose duty it was to care for the lawn in front of the house, was starting out to his work. As he passed the windows of Mr. Montressor's private office he noticed that they had not been closed the night before, and, suspecting burglary, he raised himself by means of a water barrel which stood at the corner of the house, and looked curiously into the room.

No sooner had he done so than, with all the terror peculiar to his race, he dropped to the

ground, and ran as fast as his shaking legs could carry him to tell of the ghastly sight which had met his eyes.

The door of the office was forced, and there, lying stiff and rigid on the floor, was the lifeless body of Richard Montressor.

Near the right hand was found a small self-cocking Smith and Wesson pistol, and from a bullet hole in the right temple the blood had oozed and congealed on the side of the head and on the carpet.

The desk in the centre of the room was strewn with various papers relative to the large indebtedness of the dead man, and in his left hand was tightly clenched a copy of the will of the late Robert Faulkner.

After these and many other points which had no bearing on the case whatever were carefully weighed in the massive brains of twelve individuals dignified by the name of the coroner's jury they succeeded in agreeing on the following very original verdict:

"We find that the deceased met his death

from a wound inflicted by a weapon in his own hands, for causes unknown to this jury."

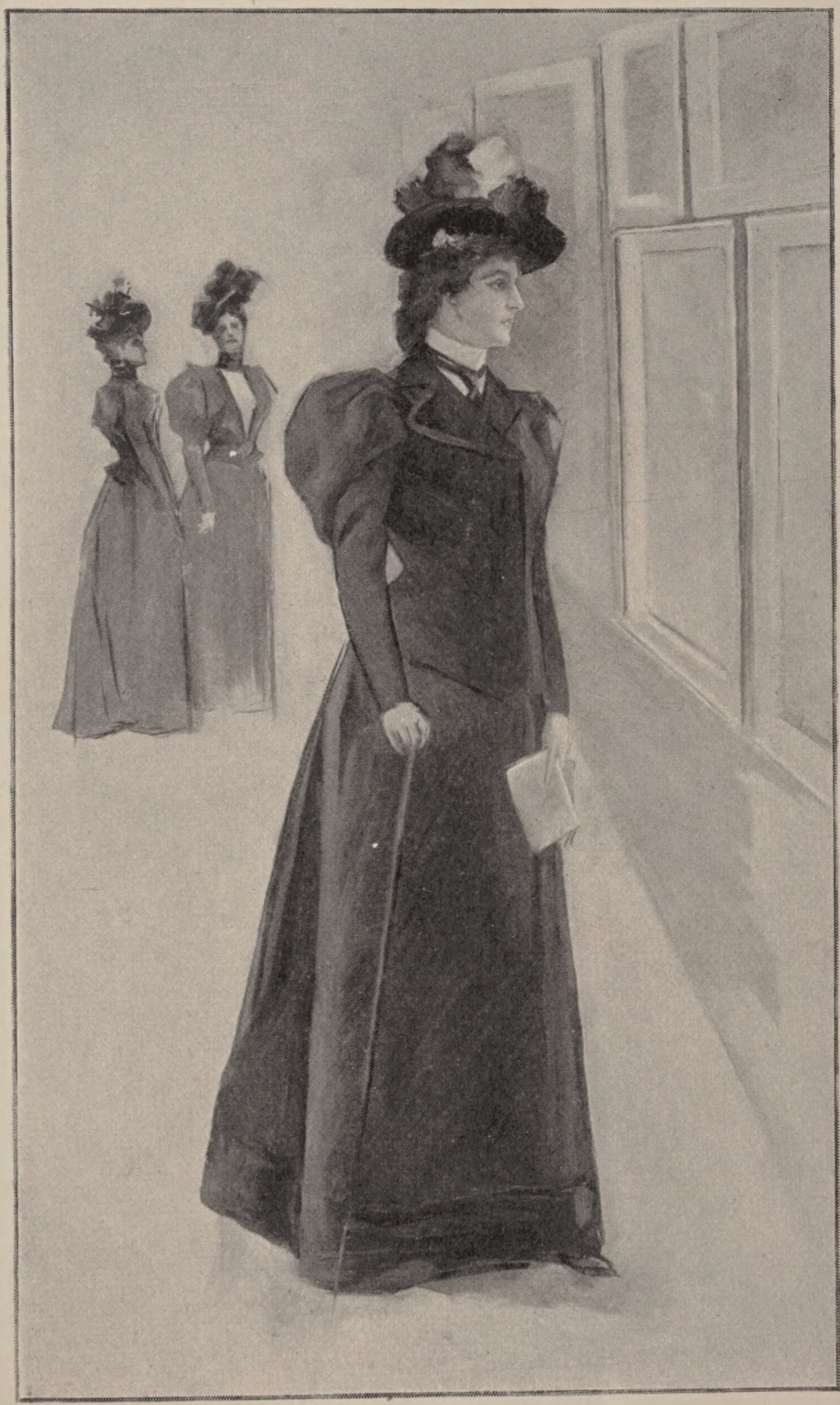
* * * * * * *

Just two weeks later, one bleak, stormy night, as the old clock was ringing out the hour before twelve, a great key was turned in its lock on the massive doors of the old mansion; and they have never been opened to this day.

CHAP. IV.

Late one autumn afternoon, two girls might have been seen in a large roomy studio in one of the more fashionable apartment houses in the City of New York. It had grown too dark to paint and a palette with brushes stuck through the thumb-hole had been carelessly thrown on the floor by the side of a divan on which, amidst a pile of many colored cushions, one of the girls was reclining. The other was seated at a piano, near by, softly playing some of the beautiful strains from Faust. On an easel in the center of the room stood an unfinished picture. It was not large nor far advanced, but showed, by its freshness of color and decisive stroke, the hand of a master.

The walls were hung with various sketches in oil and charcoal, and on the floor lay many Eastern rugs and skins, giving the place an



OFTEN SHE WOULD GO IN THE AFTERNOONS.

air of ease and comfort. In one corner a large open fire was burning brightly, throwing its soft light out upon the surrounding objects and staining the sombre grey of the twilight with rich mellow tones of yellows and reds.

The doors and windows were hung in heavy dark green stuffs of a silky texture; and various pieces of old-fashioned furniture were placed here and there to cut off some obtrusive corner, or act as pedestals for numerous casts from the works of masters past and present.

The soft strains from the piano gradually died away and the player turned toward the divan.

"I thought you were asleep, dear," she said with a smile, "you were keeping so very quiet. But Faust always has that effect on you, hasn't it? I ought not to play it. Shall I play you something brighter?"

"No, Agnes," Katherine replied dreamily, "I love Faust. No matter what my mood

may be, it seems to fit in without one discordant note. But sometimes—"

"Sometimes what, dear?" the other girl asked letting her hands fall from the keys.

"Sometimes it makes me feel as if there was something wanting in my life. I cannot define it. I do not even know what it is."

Agnes rose and came across the floor. She seated herself on a low stool by the side of the divan and put her head in Katherine's lap.

Agnes was a frail little woman with an appealing kind of beauty. A sweet, sympathetic nature, always attractive to a stronger one. Katherine put her hand out and stroked the fluffy golden head in her lap.

"I ought to long for nothing while I have you and my work," she said softly.

Agnes raised her wide-opened blue eyes and looked up into her friend's face with a pleading expression.

"Katherine," she said at last, "I wish you would fall in love with some great, good man. A noble character worthy of your own. I

know you will be famous some day. Your work has genius in it. All the critics say so. You would be so happy married to such a man. You would inspire one another to accomplish great and noble things."

A smile played around Katherine's lips for a few seconds, then her expression changed to one in which fear, grief, pain, and horror were so commingled that her companion gazed at her wonderingly. She soon, however, mastered the emotions which had taken possession of her, and, noticing the perplexed look on Agnes' face, tried to say in her usual tone:

"Oh, no, Agnes, dear, I am not the woman for that. I shall never love nor marry any man."

"Katherine," Agnes asked softly, "was there ever any one you did love, and did he die?"

Katherine bent and kissed the upturned forehead.

"No, dear," she replied, "I have never been in love with any one."

"And have you never thought that you would like to love some great, good man and have him love you? Most girls have."

Katherine rose slowly to her feet.

"I am not like other girls, Agnes," she said wearily. "You are the one to marry a great, good man. I must put all of that out of my life."

CHAP. V.

A short time after her arrival in New York, Katherine had taken the studio which we have seen, with an adjoining apartment, and had entered one of the best art schools in the city. She threw herself, heart and soul, into her work, striving each day to approach, step by step, the goal of her ambition and finding in her labors the only happiness which life held for her.

Incessant study and capacity for work soon asserted themselves and it was not many months before she was acknowledged to be the strongest student in the class.

Popularity among those with whom she studied had never been hers from the first day she had entered the school. For the devotees of so called Bohemia around her, she seemed too cold and haughty. She mingled

but little with them, respecting too much the reputations of the acknowledged masters of the day, to care to hear them shattered by the veriest novices in art.

The results from her honest study were ever a constant delight to her critic. Each sketch brought encouragement from his lips, each finished drawing his commendation and approval. Her earnestness and application led to his giving much time to his criticism of her work, and consequently she advanced rapidly, more it was said than any student in the history of the school.

With the closing of the life class for the day, Katherine's study was seldom at an end. Often she would go in the afternoons to the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum, and there study for hours at a time the works of greater painters, and learned much from their technique and composition.

One afternoon, as she was standing in front of Lepage's masterpiece, "Joan of Arc," studying this great picture, her attention was

attracted by a girl entering from an adjoining gallery. She was holding a catalogue in one hand and eagerly referring to it, then glancing from picture to picture, as if in search of one in particular.

On noticing this, Katherine advanced and asked if she could be of any assistance.

"If you will be so kind," the girl replied, her face lighting up as she spoke. "I am looking for a canvas by Lepage. This is my first visit here, and as I have heard so much about this picture I am very anxious to see it."

The sweet manners of the little stranger attracted Katherine at once, and after she was shown the object of her search, the two talked for some time on music and art in general. During their conversation, Katherine learned that her new acquaintance had come to New York to study music and that, although she had but little knowledge of the painter's art, she was devoted to any and every thing pertaining to it.

Before they separated, Katherine extended an invitation to her studio. "Come, and I

will show you my poor efforts," she said in conclusion. "It may interest you to see how we go at it; at any rate, I have a piano, and you can play for me. I know you love your music. I can tell from the enthusiastic way you speak of it."

They parted after the studio address had been given and a promise of a visit in the near future had been received in return.

A few days later the promise was fulfilled, and Katherine learned much about her new friend. She knew that she was a Virginian the first time she heard her speak, but did not dream that they had lived summer after summer within a mile of one another and that Agnes was a niece of Colonel Brynn, who owned the adjoining place to the Manor; at least, what his many adversities and the war had left of it for him.

All this, together with their music and art, made a bond of union between them and soon caused their acquaintance to rapidly grow into a deep and lasting friendship.

Agnes became a frequent visitor to the studio, and Katherine grew to expect a glimpse, at least, of her bright face every other day and to miss her greatly when demands on her time kept her away.

After several months, Katherine persuaded Agnes to come and live in her apartments, but not, however, until she had consented to allow Agnes to bear her part of the expense. Katherine remonstrated much about this, saying that it made no difference. She had everything in the world she wanted. Agnes had so little, and that it would be a charity if she would come, for five big rooms with nobody but the servants to talk to were so lonely.

Agnes listened to all this attentively. Her big blue eyes filling with tears. She put her arms around Katherine's neck, kissed her and told her how good and kind she was and how much she appreciated it all. She was sure she never could have lived a whole winter in that great, wicked city unless she had met her. Katherine returned the embrace and told her

that she was the dearest little woman in the world. She, too, didn't know what she would have done without her. Agnes' proposition was finally, of necessity, consented to, and one day when she had brought some money instead of her check, which Katherine had said she always preferred having, the latter made some excuse by saying she thought a check was so much nicer and cleaner. If Agnes didn't mind she would like her to put the money in bank again when she went to her music lesson and let her have a check instead.

And Agnes said that she, too, thought money was horrid stuff; she was sure it spread all kinds of disease. That evening she brought her check to Katherine, written in a very large hand with a very black line under the signature. Katherine waited until she had gone out of the room, and then tore it into very small pieces and threw it into the fire, as she had done with all the others.

Agnes couldn't understand why the little red figures at the bottom of the column in her

bank book showed so much money to her credit. She was sure the bank was cheating itself, and she thought it would be only right to call attention to it. Katherine assured her with a smile that it was all right, that banks never did such things, and that she was a good manager to make her little funds go so far.

CHAP. VI.

The galleries of the National Academy of Design were crowded. The occasion was an exhibition of portraits loaned by their various owners and sent from all parts of the country. Here were shown the works of such masters as Sargent, Duran, Bonnat, Lefebvre, Constant, and many others of the present day. The old masters, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Frans Hals, Valesquez, Holbein, Rubens, were also well represented.

It was a treat for the lovers of art long to be remembered. A large placard at the door announced the fact that the receipts from the exhibition were to go for the benefit of a home for crippled children. It looked that afternoon as if all the crippled children in New York would be cured, and all the incurable ones would have an abundance of crutches for the rest of their natural lives.

Carriages were lined up on both sides of the street for blocks; and the people were pouring into the building as fast as the doorkeeper could take their tickets.

This was one of the few occasions of its kind when the discriminating public were not being robbed for "sweet Charity's sake" and consequently they came *en masse*. Some because they loved art; others because they thought it was the thing to do; and still a few because they had purchased tickets from a charitable point of view and thought it was a pity not to use them. The exhibition had been advertised for some time before its opening, and Katherine had been looking forward to it with not a little pleasure.

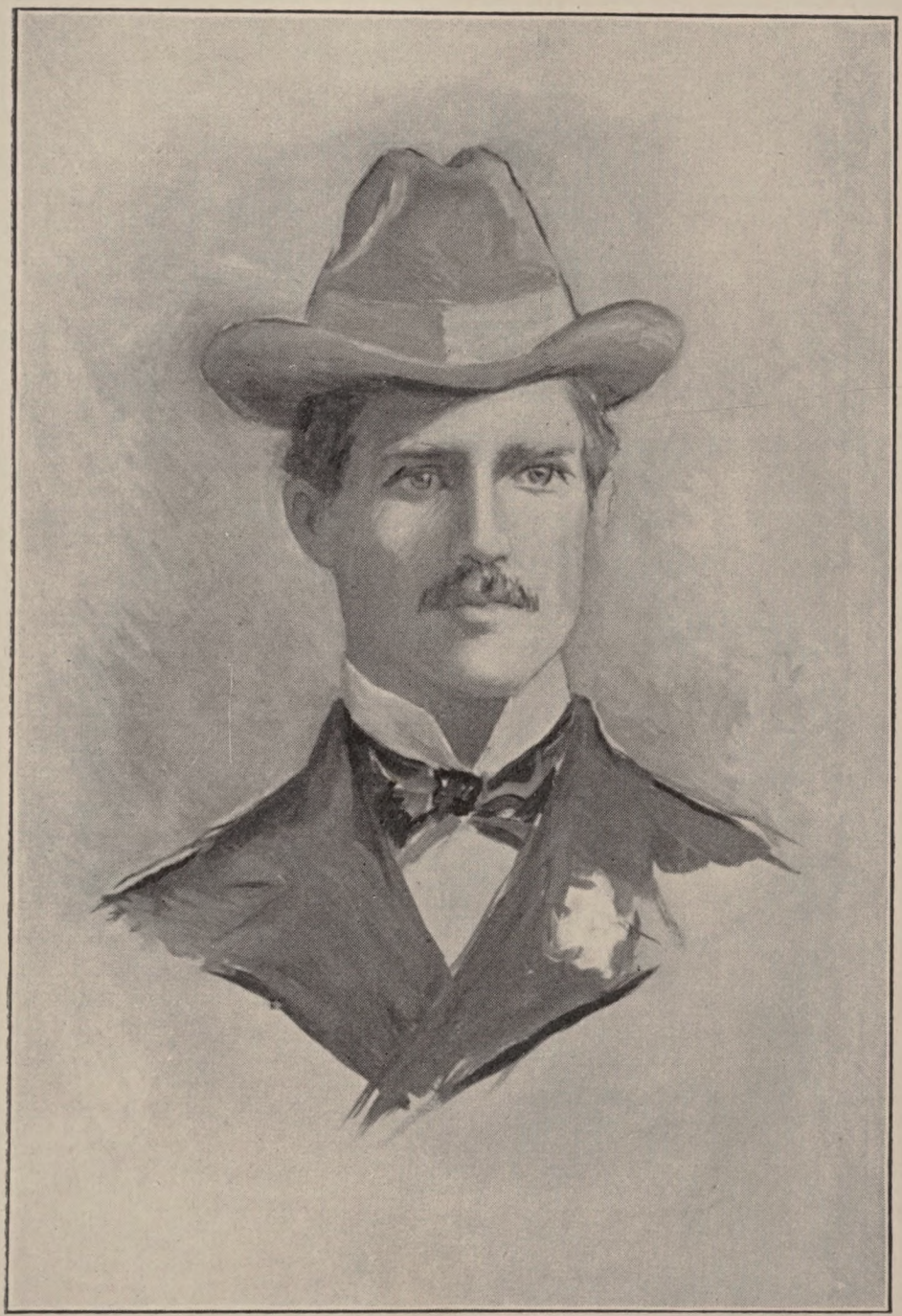
She had failed to purchase tickets beforehand, however, not dreaming that anything in the way of art would attract more than a corporal's guard, and consequently she and Agnes had been doing the best they could, for twenty minutes or more, to get to the ticket office.

"Don't you think we had better put it off until to-morrow?" Agnes asked after some minutes of silence.

"I'm afraid we will never get in there to-day, and, if we do, we won't be able to see the pictures for the crowd. Come let us go home and wait until to-morrow. We can then see with so much more comfort."

Katherine assented, a little disappointed at not seeing what she had looked forward to for so long a time, and they worked their way out of the crowd and turned their footsteps homeward.

"Oh! Miss Agnes," old Mandy burst forth as they entered the door of Katherine's apartments, "Der has bin de fines' gent'm'n he'ah ter see you I eber laid my two eyes on. He wah perft'ly beauf'l, dat he wah. He seem awf'l sorry you wah out, too. He's ckard's dar on de tabul. He cert'ny wah beauf'l. What a gran' husban' he'd make fer one ob you young ladies. He minded me ob Massa Robert when he wah young, dat he did, Miss



"MANDY IS RIGHT, HE IS A 'BEAUTY.'"

Katherine. He wah de fines' gent'm'n I'se seen in dis heah city since I'se bin he'ah, scusan nobody."

"I wonder who it could have been Katherine?" Agnes said with some surprise, crossing the hall to get the card as she spoke. "Oh! look here," she exclaimed, "isn't this delicious. It was Mr. Gordon; he's a man I met down in Virginia three or four summers ago. He was there, getting some facts for a story he was writing at the time. I'm so glad he's coming back, Katherine, for I want you to meet him so much. Mandy is right, he is a beauty, and, unlike most handsome men, he has quantities of brains. He has already made a big reputation for himself by his writing,—and *such* a voice,—oh! Katherine, you just ought to hear him sing. Its divine. Mandy, did he say when he would be back?"

"No, miss, he din' say, but I don' rek'n it'll be long, miss, from de way he lu'k."

"I wonder how he knew I was in New York," Agnes said, after she and Katherine

had had a good laugh at Mandy's enthusiasm. "He's a splendid fellow," Agnes continued. putting her arm around Katherine and giving her a good squeeze. "I do so want you to meet him. I know you will like him. You couldn't possibly help it. He has so much character and—"

"Well—and what?" Katherine asked with a smile.

"And I know he will fall heels-over-head in love with you the instant he sees you."

"Don't you think you are a little previous, dear?" Katherine replied, her face flushing slightly as she spoke. "He came to see you, not me. I doubt if he knows I'm in existence."

They had passed down the hallway and were now seated on an old-fashioned sofa, in the library.

"Oh, y-e-s he does," Agnes replied slowly. "He talked lots the summer I knew him about the beautiful Miss Montressor who always had her mastiff with her. He used to steal down to the end of our place and wait

for hours for you to come by on horseback. Uncle Jim would say that he certainly was a queer chap to sit out there with the ants and caterpillars when there were three big rooms in the house he could do his writing in. One night in the moonlight he got very confidential and told me that he intended to put you in a book some day. When I asked him to describe you, he expressed great surprise that we were not acquainted. I think he had visions of my taking him over to your place. Then he started to compare you to one of the goddesses—I've forgotten which one—when Uncle Jim came out on the porch and asked him if he wouldn't come in and have a julep. He couldn't very well refuse. It broke us all up."

"Are you quite sure, my little lady," Katherine asked, taking Agnes' hand in hers, "that someone hasn't a soft spot in her heart somewhere for this very talented knight of the pen."

"Oh! Katherine, how ridiculous; why of course not," Agnes said, perking up her little

mouth and trying to look very serious. "We were of necessity thrown a great deal together; then, too, we were both musical, and that's all there was to it. Purely platonic, I assure you. But won't he be surprised to see you here," she continued, her face lighting up. "He has no idea that I know you. This world is a small place, after all, isn't it Katherine?"

"Yes, dear," Katherine answered wearily, "it is and a very sad one for some of us."

Agnes leaned and placed one arm around her companion's neck. The expression which had now become so familiar to her had returned once more and brought with it the lines of pain and sorrow.

"Tell me Katherine, tell me what it is? It nearly breaks my heart to see you look that way."

Katherine drew the sweet, sympathetic face down close to her breast and pressed her lips against the golden hair.

"No, dear," she murmured softly, "my burden must be borne alone."

CHAP. VII.

The next morning, Katherine attracted no little attention as she and Agnes walked into the main gallery of the Art Academy.

Her tailor-made gown of black broad-cloth seemed a very simple affair to the uninitiated, but to those of more experienced judgment in such matters, it showed the workmanship of a master-hand. The long simple folds of the skirt swayed gracefully to the motion of her step and the coat, which was swinging open, disclosed a vest of brilliant crimson intensifying the lustre of her dark eyes and deepening the rich brown tones of her hair.

On her head she wore a large Gainsborough hat covered with nodding ostrich plumes, and in one hand she carried a thin and tightly rolled umbrella, the handle of which was surmounted with a knob of dark blue Dresden.

She seemed totally unconscious of the many eyes directed towards her and of the stir her entrance caused.

In going the rounds of the galleries, Katherine explained to Agnes the masterly parts of technique in the pictures, from a painter's point of view. The two girls seated themselves on a sofa in front of one of Sargent's portraits, that of a young girl with large dreamy eyes and a pallid complexion.

"Isn't it wonderful how he can paint so simply," Katherine said, referring to her catalogue to see whose portrait it was.

"Her name is not given here. It just says portrait of 'Miss C.' I wonder if she really was as beautiful as that. Arn't those eyes soft and dreamy? Her very soul seems to shine through them. Oh, how I would love to do that. I would give years of my life if I could only keep my technique as simple."

She rose and walked close to the canvas in order to see how the painter had obtained his effect. "That shadow on the arm is one con-

tinuous stroke from the wrist to the elbow," she said, reseating herself as she spoke. "He's marvelous. I can't imagine how he ever accomplishes such results with apparently so little effort."

"It is very beautiful," Agnes replied, "and it must be delightful to be able to do it. I know of no life that should be happier than that of a painter, and yet, I suppose the work of a true artist never satisfies him. They seem to be very much like musicians in that respect—continually striving for something which they never attain. The painting must necessarily fall very far short of nature itself. Does it not?"

"Yes," Katherine replied, "even under the hand of the greatest. You have here some of the finest examples of the best painters of the day, and yet look how lifeless they seem compared to the people that are standing around them. It is impossible to carry art further than a certain point, and that is very far short of nature. White is all we have with which

to represent pure light, and it is a poor substitute, but then we have the advantage in being able to improve on the proportions of the human figure. Few, if any, persons of today are proportioned according to the ideas of the old Greek sculptors. I am afraid some of our society women who are accredited with fine figures are very sorry sights when stripped of their raiment."

"Yes," Agnes replied thoughtfully, "clothes *have* a great deal to do with it, haven't they?"

"And yet Venus was a success," Katherine said smilingly. "Come, let us go into the other gallery," she continued, "I am afraid it is almost time we were leaving. I want to take a good look at the Rembrandts before we go."

They walked into the adjoining room, which was entirely empty with the exception of two or three long-haired art students who were posing in front of some of the pictures at the further end of the gallery and screwing their faces up into all sorts of contortions, with eyes closed to the merest slit to get "the effect," as they call it.

"It's wonderful how some of these pictures keep their brilliancy," Katherine said, as she and Agnes stood in front of one of Rembrandt's works. "This one is at least two hundred years old and yet it looks as though it were painted yesterday. These old fellows surely had some secret for grinding their colors which is unknown to the manufacturers of to-day. Just look how rich those reds are. I hardly think the works of our present masters will look as fresh two hundred years hence."

Just then a tall, broad-shouldered man of about thirty years of age entered the gallery by the same door through which the girls had come. His face was clean shaven with the exception of a small moustache which was carefully trimmed and somewhat darker than the hair in color, his eyes were large and intelligent, his nose slightly of the Roman type and finely chiseled. He wore a black Prince Albert coat and trousers of a lighter material. In his right hand he held his hat, and in the

other a pair of undressed kid gloves of a light greyish tone. He did not notice the two girls, who were standing some distance from the door, and, turning to the left, the opposite direction from the one they had taken, was soon absorbed in the pictures and apparently oblivious to everything else around him.

"Come, we must go, Agnes; its half past one now," Katherine said, looking at her watch. "I have an engagement with a model at three, and I don't want to be late. It is dark so soon now in the afternoon that one hardly has time to get well started on a study before the light fails. We can come again to-morrow and as often as you like afterwards. I never get tired of looking at good pictures, but I'm afraid standing so long this morning has over-taxed your strength. You look fatigued."

"But I'm not, though," her companion answered, "I love to hear you talk art and do believe if I did not have my music I would try to learn something about drawing myself. It takes a life-time, though, to accomplish anything in either and I am very much afraid—

As she turned she recognized the tall figure of the man standing on the opposite side of the gallery.

"There's Mr. Gordon, now," she whispered quickly to Katherine. "He must have seen us. I think it would only be civil in him to come over and speak, to say the least of it, after I sat for hours listening to his tiresome old manuscript and pulled down all the dusty books in the library to help him with some dates for his novel. That's just like a man. I hope his old book wasn't a success. It would serve him right."

Katherine could not help giving a slight laugh, which, owing to the emptiness of the gallery at the time, sounded much louder than it would have otherwise done. It attracted Gordon's attention and he turned to see its origin. Recognizing Agnes, he started across the room to speak to her.

Katherine moved some little distance away and interested herself in a picture by Holbein. Her face was turnd away from Gordon, and

he did not recognize her by her figure, which had rounded and become more womanly since he had last seen her.

"Why, I am delighted to see you," Gordon said, coming up to where Agnes was standing and holding out his hand to her as he spoke. "It seems an age since I spent those very pleasant weeks in Virginia with you and your uncle. How long has it really been? A good five years, I am sure."

"Just three this last July," Agnes replied, with a smile. "Does time really hang so heavily on your hands?" she asked, looking up into his face with a quizzical expression. "If so, I think I can devise a plan to make it go more rapidly."

"No, I can't say that it does exactly," Gordon replied, not catching the drift of her remark; "I am always pegging away at something and basking in the pleasures of hope. It's a long road that has no turning, you know."

"I think yours has several very decided ones," she replied, "I am afraid you will never

be satisfied until you make the sun rise in the west."

Gordon acknowledged the compliment graciously, and she continued:

"How did you know I was in New York, and how did you know my address? I should think it would be hard to find a very little girl like me in a very big city like this?"

"It hasn't proven so this morning," he said laughingly.

"No, I suppose I am like the proverbial bad pennies. One is bound to run across them sooner or later. Oh, I know," she exclaimed, "you heard from Uncle Jim. He wrote me that he had received a letter from you, and that you would be back in New York about this time."

"Exactly so, and I hadn't been here three days before I looked you up."

"I see you still know how to say pretty things," she said smilingly, "it's a bad habit."

"Pardon me," he said, "I will try to do better in the future. And your Uncle,—how

is he? I was very sorry that it was impossible for me to accept his kind invitation last summer."

"Oh, he's very well, thank you," she replied; "he's always well."

"And the beautiful Miss Montressor, does she still ride around the country in big picturesque black hats?"

"No, she has given up the riding," Agnes replied laughingly, "but she still wears the big picturesque black hats. Come, I want to introduce you to a friend of mine who knows her very well."

They crossed over to where Katherine was standing.

"Miss Montressor," Agnes said as Katherine turned, "let me introduce Mr. Gordon."

SWAYED GRACEFULLY TO THE MOTION OF HER STEP.

CHAP. VIII.

"No, I can't say that I do, Agnes, he's like most of the literary people I have met—very much self-centered, and, it struck me, somewhat narrow minded. He talked nothing but self all the way home. Perhaps I am a little hasty in forming an opinion. I suppose it isn't exactly fair to criticise until we know more about the object of our criticism."

"Yes, I know what you mean," Agnes responded in a disappointed tone, "but I do not think he was exactly himself this afternoon. He seemed a little out of sorts, and then, too, he was at a considerable disadvantage; just imagine having 'a goddess of the night' sprung on you without the slightest warning. It was enough to frighten any man."

"Having a *what* sprung on you?" Katherine asked eagerly.

"A goddess of the night," her companion replied, "that's what he used to call you, when

you would come dashing by on your 'black charger,' as he expressed it."

Katherine broke forth in a merry little laugh.

"Well," she exclaimed, "he didn't seem to care to worship at her shrine this afternoon,—the capital 'I' seemed to be his only idol. I do believe at times he was entirely unaware of our presence. He asked me two or three questions in a patronizing kind of a way, and before I had time to answer he was talking about something else. I thought he never would go, too. Why don't people come in instead of keeping one standing at the door, and why do they say good-bye if they don't intend to go? I asked him in as cordially as I knew how, and he wouldn't do one thing or the other."

"Well, dear," Agnes responded, "as I said before, I think he was at a disadvantage. He has always impressed me as a man who would wear well. It isn't fair to judge people too quickly; the first impression is often a mis-

taken one. The very people who sometimes make our dearest and truest friends have not impressed us favorably at first; and, on the contrary, there are those who attract us on first acquaintance, but who bitterly disappoint when brought face to face with the graver questions of life. Don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly, my little philosopher," Katherine answered. "I think you are right, and I am sorry I formed any opinion about Mr. Gordon. Then, too, I am afraid, I am not a fair judge. I have known few men during—"

Her sentence was cut short by a timid ring at the outer door-bell of the studio. She rose and went to see who it was.

"Is this Miss Montressor?" a delicate looking woman asked, producing a card with some writing on it addressed to Katherine, who read it and asked the new-comer in.

She was a woman of about twenty-five years of age, taller than the average, with a wealth of reddish brown hair, combed back from the forehead, and coiled in a big knot at the back

of the head. Her eyes were large and grey, and drooped at the corners, which gave them a very sad Madonna-like expression. The other features were clean cut and refined, the teeth very white and regular. She was well dressed, and had the bearing of one who should be in a higher station of life.

Katherine asked her to be seated, and replied, in answer to an inquiry whether she wanted a model, that she did for a picture she intended to paint for the spring exhibition.

"My subject will be taken from Hawthorne's 'Scarlet Letter'," she said, "and I would like you to pose for the figure of 'Hester Prynne.' Your head is very much the type."

A bitter smile played around the woman's lips. She gave Katherine an inquiring look, then said:

"I have posed for a great many of the artists, sometimes for the head and—and sometimes for the figure. They all say I make a good model and fall back into the pose easily. When would you want me?"

Katherine told her that she would like to start as soon as possible; the next day, if she could come. They arranged for the first pose. The woman put down the time in a small note-book. Thanking and assuring Katherine that she would be punctual, she left the room.

"That woman has an interesting face," Katherine said when she heard the door of the elevator close. "She looked to me as if she had met with some great sorrow. I would hardly take her to be the kind who would pose for the figure. She seemed so refined. I couldn't imagine what she wanted at first. I thought probably she was someone I had met in the schools and forgotten."

"Oh, I think it's dreadful," responded Agnes, in a sorrowful tone; "why can't artists learn to draw without studying from the nude. Can't they learn as much from a draped figure or a cast?"

"No," Katherine answered, "the study from the nude is indispensable. The figure painter must have a good foundation for his work,

which is only obtained by long and earnest study of this kind. He would not be able to paint his draperies correctly unless he was thoroughly familiar with the formation of the bones and muscles beneath them. His figures would not live, they would not look like real beings."

"But, Katherine, your figures seem to live and—and you have never studied from the nude."

Her face was so pure, so earnest, as she asked the question, and so confident of a negative reply, that Katherine hesitated some little time before she responded. What, if Agnes should deem this wrongful, would she think if she should ever learn the cause of all her mental suffering? The thought oppressed her. A great lump rose in her throat.

"Before I answer your question," Katherine said at last, "I would like to ask you one: Is not dissection, looking at it from a moral standpoint, as bad, if not worse, than studying from the nude?"

"No," Agnes answered promptly, "dissection is for the good of suffering humanity."

"And do you not think that art is for the same purpose? Is it not the arts and sciences of a nation that mark its progress? Force and right are the governors of the world. How great a power lies in the force of the beautiful when expressed through the fine arts—the noblest of them all. 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' It not only inspires, but purifies. What nation in the annals of history has ever arrived at any height of civilization before it has produced masterpieces of art in sculpture or in painting?"

Agnes was beyond her depth. She struggled back bravely and did her best to hold up her side of the argument.

"How could you expect me to draw at all, Agnes, if I hadn't studied from the nude. It was only just before I met you that I gave it up to see if I could put what I had learned into practical use by painting some finished canvases in my studio. All women painters

of any note have studied from the nude. It doesn't seem to have hurt them morally, but only to have rounded out their characters."

"Well, Katherine, dear," Agnes said finally, "I hope you are not vexed,—I really don't know anything about it. I suppose I should have considered the end before the means, and I know if you have done it, it must be right."

CHAP. IX.

Two months have passed since the chance meeting at the loan exhibition.

Gordon's visits to the studio have been very frequent and the three have been thrown much together.

Katherine had found him, as Agnes had expressed it on the first day of their meeting, "a man who wore well." What, at first, had seemed to her to be egotism had disappeared on closer acquaintance, and if she had any lingering doubts as to his conceit they were quickly dispelled when she saw the constant struggle he was making against being lionized, and how he refused invitation after invitation in order to take long walks with her or Agnes, in search of local color.

Often towards the close of the afternoons, when the day's work was finished in the studio, he would drop in and have a chat. And

sometimes when Agnes was out he and Katherine would sit in front of the big log fire and discuss their many plans for future work.

She felt herself drifting into a more than friendly feeling for him, and he, on his part, made no attempt to conceal the happiness he derived from being in her presence, and the intense interest he took in her work and all that concerned her.

One Friday, when Gordon had been called out of town unexpectedly and had failed to appear at the "Afternoon" in the studio which she had arranged for that evening of each week, Katherine caught herself wondering where he could be, and—yes—worrying a little, too. Unconsciously she had looked forward to seeing him all day, and had thought of the pleasure it would give him to hear the violinist whom Agnes had persuaded to come and play.

As she sat listening to the beautiful strains of Chopin's II. nocturn pouring forth from the violin under the hand of a master, she sud-

denly became aware that Gordon's absence made more difference to her than she had supposed it would. A want of something to make her pleasure complete, an ache of disappointment in her heart, could mean but one thing. The realization of her love for him had come upon her at last with a fullness of conviction which left no room for doubt. She was conscious now of what it was her life had lacked, and knew that the man she loved was worthy of it all.

During the next few weeks she felt, at times, intense happiness followed always by overwhelming despair. It seemed so hard, so cruelly hard, that she should put this great happiness out of her life, and yet she knew the longer she drifted on into a fool's paradise, the harder would be the end which she felt must come at last.

Had she considered herself alone, she would have eagerly taken as much time as Fate would grant, but she knew that by delay she only made it harder for Gordon to bear when he should learn the truth.

She made many plans and finally decided that it would be best to go abroad with Agnes. By putting the breadth of the ocean between herself and Gordon and remaining away for an indefinite period, she would give him the opportunity to forget her and to fill the place which she now held in his life.

One day she spoke to Gordon about this, saying that she thought it would be so much better for Agnes to study abroad, where she would have more advantages.

He agreed with her at once, and said it would be best, he thought, for both of them, and that he would go over, too, and take care of them while they were there, and get a little room down in the Latin Quarter, where he could write short stories about the long-haired art students who do little but sit around the cafes and look picturesque until their last sou is spent, and then "pan" off some worthless copy on an unsuspecting American.

Katherine saw that all her plans were useless. She realized that he would follow her

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wherever she went and that they would be thrown more together in a strange country than in New York, where they both had other associates. She, therefore, determined to remain where she was and to tell Gordon, at the first opportunity, that he must discontinue his visits and forget all about her.

As hard as all this was, she thought it would be best for him.

She feared herself, and for that reason decided to make the sacrifice.

CHAP. X.

Katherine's picture of the "Scarlet Letter" was nearly completed. She had framed it, in order to see where to strengthen and accent, before varnishing for the exhibition.

She was now alone in her studio, viewing her work from a distance, with a dejected expression and an air of disappointment.

"He will not like it," she said to herself, "how could he after spending years in Paris. I will never do anything, I might as well give up. There is no use in me trying. The figures are stiff and bad in action, the colors, muddy and lifeless." She then drew the drapery, shutting the picture from view, and took up a portfolio containing her studies. She sat for some time, turning over the drawings and selecting the ones she thought would be of use in future works. After they had been placed in a pocket of the portfolio by them-

selves she again returned to her easel and drew back the drapery.

"No, there is no use in me trying to deceive myself. It is a bad piece of work, and all my labor has been wasted." She then selected a large brush from a lot that were standing in a jar by the side of her easel, and filled it full of color. She stepped back once more before carrying out her impulse of destroying the picture.

"No," she said to herself, as she replaced the palette on the floor, "I will see what he has to say, first. Perhaps the defects magnify themselves in my eyes because I have looked at it too much. There may be some good there, after all." She took the picture from the easel and placed it on the floor, with its face to the wall.

Two afternoons later, she was again alone in her studio, painting some still-life for the sake of study, when old Mandy made her appearance in the doorway.

"Mr. Gordon is in de libery, Miss Katherine; shall I awsk him in?"

"Oh!" Katherine exclaimed, "wait one moment, Mandy."

She quickly crossed the room and, bringing her picture of the "Scarlet Letter," she placed it on the easel instead of the still-life study on which she had been working.

"Now you may ask Mr. Gordon in," she said to Mandy, who was still standing in the doorway. She had just pulled the drapery around the picture when Gordon entered.

"I am afraid I will wear my welcome out if I have not done so already," he said, as he came into the studio. "Do you know, this is the third time I have been here in the past week."

"And do you keep a record of the number of your visits," she said smilingly as she advanced to meet him.

"Not exactly, but trespassers, you know, are generally endowed with guilty consciences."

"I am always glad to see you, as you know, or you wouldn't talk that way," she replied,

"and I am particularly so this afternoon, for I have something I want to show you."

"A new picture?"

"Yes, and before I show it to you, you must promise to give me an unbiased criticism."

"I do," Gordon replied solemnly.

"If you stand here you will get the best effect," she said, "that is if it happens to contain any at all."

She then parted the drapery and stood back to await anxiously his criticism.

"Well," she said, after a short pause, "what do you think of it? Remember your promise."

"Miss Montressor," Gordon said, "I am surprised. I had no idea you could paint like that. It is a marvelous piece of work, and I say it in all sincerity. How did you ever accomplish that expression of mingled remorse and defiance on the face of Hester Prynne."

At his words of praise, all the defects which had before seemed so glaring vanished in an

instant. She felt that her highest ambition had been achieved. He had praised her work in the warmest terms. What difference did it make what others thought? He was pleased—that was sufficient for her.

"I have my model to thank for the most of it," she replied, in a tone of suppressed joy. "She has one of the most interesting heads I ever painted. The model does the greater part of the work, anyhow," she continued; "so much depends on having one who takes an interest in what you are doing, and enters into the spirit of it."

"Yes, I should think that would be the greater part of the battle," he replied, thoughtfully, "but then, too, the painter must have a great deal of knowledge and taste, to accomplish what you have done here."

"I put my best work on the figure of Hester," Katherine replied, "and those grim-looking old Puritans by the scaffold there,—they gave me much more trouble than she did, however. My model was such a true type for

her figure, that I only had to make a good portrait to accomplish what I wanted."

"Her face is very familiar to me," he said, after he had stepped up to the picture and examined it closely. "Where could I have seen it before?"

"I hardly think any place," Katherine said; "she came here one afternoon with a card from a student at the 'League,' and asked if I could use her as a model. She seems to be far superior to the average, and so gentle and refined in her manners, that I have really become very much attached to her. She is coming again to-morrow, to let me put the finishing touches on the draperies."

"You know," she continued after a short pause, "you unconsciously complimented me when you said that her face seemed familiar to you, never having seen the original. It shows that I have put some life in my painting or it would not seem familiar."

"And I can sincerely compliment you consciously," Gordon replied; "I think it is a splendid piece of work."

Just then old Mandy entered the studio, with her arms full of logs. She made the best courtesy she could under the circumstances and started across the room with her burden.

"Let me help you with that, Mandy," Gordon said, as he advanced towards her. "I'm afraid it's too heavy for you, you'll break your poor old back."

"Law, Massa Gordon," she said, her honest black face lighting up as she spoke, "you'd get your han'som coat all sp'ilt and that would neber do. I'se a heap stronger than you t'inks I is, sah. I'se gettin' old, I knows dat, but der's right smart strength lef' in me yit."

"You know," Gordon said, after Mandy had stirred the fire and left the room, "I never can see an older person of any kind carry a heavy weight that I don't want to stop and help them with it."

"Mandy ought not to do it," Katherine said, "but there is not much use in me telling her about it. She never minds what I say in mat-

ters of this kind. I do believe she thinks I am not a day older than when she used to rock me to sleep in my cradle."

"She is not a connoisseur in art, then?" he asked laughingly.

"Not exactly."

"It was only last week," he said after a short pause, "that I met a poor old fellow, bent nearly double with rheumatism, staggering under the weight of a heavy trunk, which he was endeavoring to carry out to the curb, to place with the rest of his dilapidated belongings. It did my heart good to see his gratitude after I had helped him. I have forgotten exactly how many 'God bless yous' he bestowed upon my head, but I am sure it was five at least. I asked him if he was moving. It was very obvious that he was, but I had to say something after all the blessings he had showered upon me. He told me, with tears in his eyes, that his landlord—a very gruff-looking fellow, with a thick neck and short cropped hair, who was standing on the stoop

at the time—had put him out for his rent, only due that morning, and in advance at that. It amounted to the miserable sum of four dollars a month."

"I asked him where he intended to go and found that he had no place and that his things would have to remain on the street until he could find somewhere to put them."

"How pathetic," Katherine said sympathetically, "and what was the outcome of it all."

"Well, to cut a long story short, the brute of a landlord took exception to the things being left in front of the building, and showed his ire by dealing a pretty hard blow on the old man's shoulder. That was just a little more, I think, than any man could stand, so I spent the next five minutes or so getting rid of some of my superfluous energy on the fellow's head. Probably he will be more polite to his tenants in future."

"What became of the old man," Katherine asked, with much interest.

"Oh, I helped him to move his goods and chattels into a room next door, which was for

rent. The landlord there seemed to be a little better sort. The old fellow comes hobbling up to see me every two or three days and begs me to let him work out the miserable little sum I gave him. I will have to find something for him to do, or I am afraid he will not let me help him again when his rent comes due. Don't you think you can use him as a model. He has a fine old head."

"Yes, I am sure I can," Katherine answered, only too glad of an opportunity to help some one in need. "Oh, I wish I was a man!" she exclaimed. "It must be delightful to meet with adventures like that."

"Yes," Gordon replied, with a slight laugh, "it is rather interesting but, at the same time, a little risky. One never knows what he is getting into."

He drew up two large chairs, in front of the brightly burning fire. He and Katherine sat in front of it watching the blazing logs as they hissed and crackled, and the red flames leaping far up into the chimney.

Their conversation drifted back to art, and finally to Katherine's picture of the "Scarlet Letter."

"I am sure it will make a stir in art circles," Gordon said. "It is so much stronger than any of the other compositions I have seen on the same subject. You have carried out your ideas in an original way, which is very hard to do now-a-days. Your conception of Hester Prynne is, to my mind, the true one. I have always thought of her as one who was more sinned against than sinning."

"I am glad you like it," Katherine said. "I have put a great deal of time and thought on this work and have tried hard to avoid the conventional way of doing it."

"And you have succeeded admirably," he broke in with enthusiasm. "The laurels you will win will compensate for all the pains you have taken. You did not introduce the character of Dimmesdale," he continued. "I think it is best as you have it. So many painters who have attempted this subject seem to have

thought it necessary to crowd in all the characters of the book, thereby weakening the ensemble and detracting from the principal figure—that of Hester. They should leave something for the imagination of the observer."

"Dimmesdale has always been such a contemptible character in my sight," she said, "that I hesitated to attempt to paint him. Someone has said, I have forgotten who, 'that artists should not paint subjects with which they are not in sympathy.' I have never yet attempted one with which I was not in touch that I did not fail. Dimmesdale was contemptible. I despise weakness in a man."

"And yet you surely have some sympathy for him. Do you not think that other motives than mere cowardice prompted him to pursue the course he did? He was undoubtedly doing lots of good among his people that would have been out of his power had he confessed his guilt from the beginning. His suffering was surely as great, if not greater, than hers.

A secret crime gnawing at the heart and putting a nature at war with itself is certainly much harder to bear than one which has been confessed, even though it has not been forgiven."

Katherine's face grew white and rigid; her colorless lips trembled nervously; and her dark eyes, which were staring fixedly at Gordon, seemed twice their size in contrast to her pallid skin.

He was bending forward and carelessly knocking back with the poker some hot ashes which had fallen on the hearth, and did not notice the ghastly change. Had he turned at that moment, he could not but have suspected a hidden secret in her life which she had striven so hard to keep from him.

"I do not mean to uphold Dimmesdale's course altogether," he said at length; "far from it, but, at the same time, I cannot see that it would have made matters any better for Hester had he spoken. It was unmistakably the author's intention to convey to the minds

of his readers that the points I spoke of a few moments ago had been weighed in the mind of the minister beforehand. Hard as it may seem, I have no doubt he thought he was acting for the best. If you remember, Dimmesdale charges Hester after she had ascended the scaffold to speak the name of the man."

Katherine had by this time, through sheer force of will, mastered her emotion. She felt that she could now speak without a tremor in her voice and without giving rise to any suspicion on his part.

"Oh, yes," she said slowly, he was appointed to do it, and then too, he knew how deeply Hester loved him, and that he was safe in asking her the question. I cannot see any excuse for his cowardice. Why didn't he stand up like a man and confess his share of their guilt? What right had he to make her bear the brunt of it all?"

"Well," Gordon replied good naturedly, "I am glad he didn't in the book, for the world

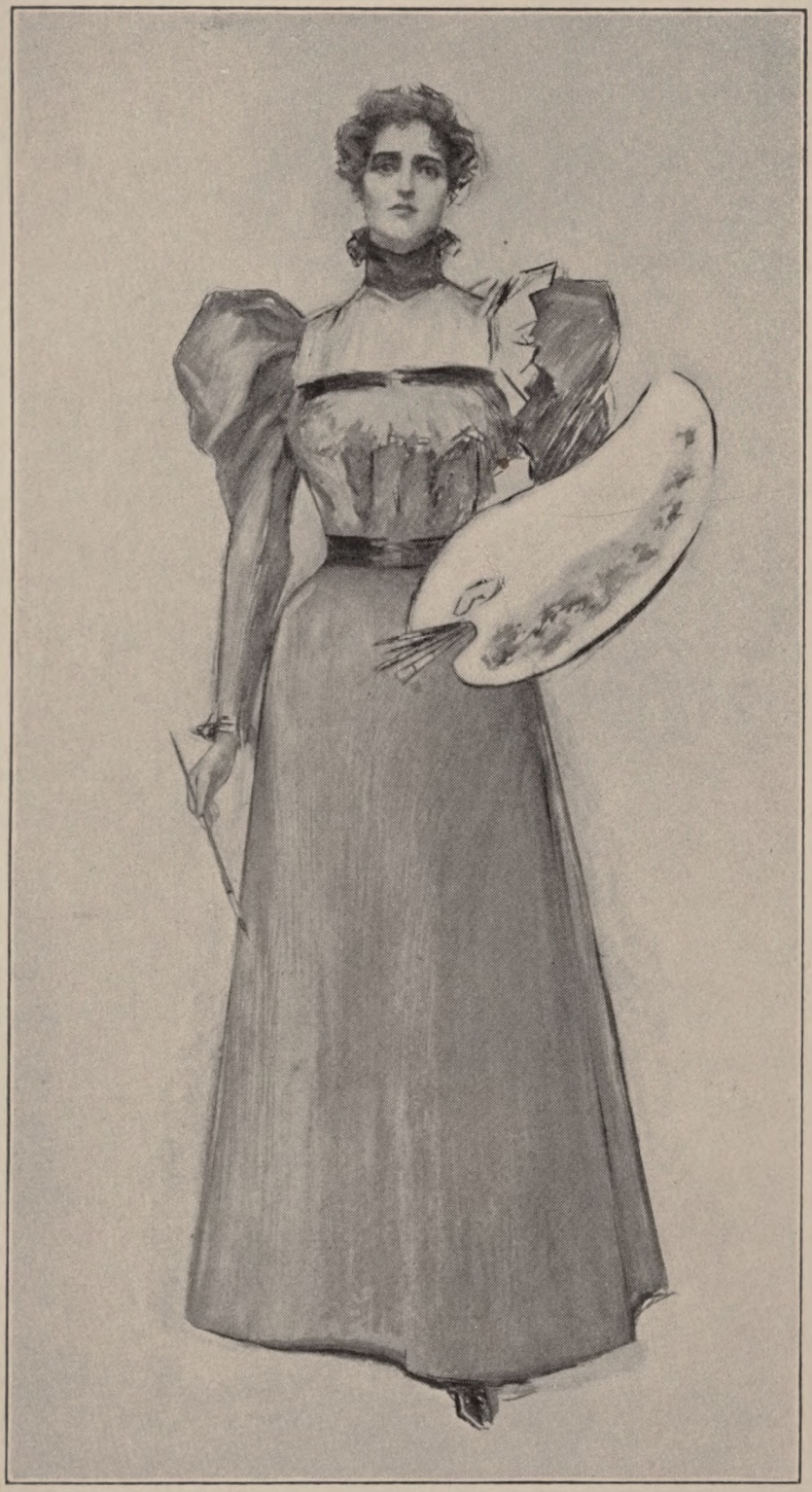
would then have been deprived of a very beautiful story, and you would never have painted your picture. It is an ill wind, indeed, that blows no one any good. I must be off now," he continued, rising to his feet.

The room had grown quite dark, and Katherine pretended not to see his hand held out to her, lest by bringing her own in contact with it he should discover how cold and nervous it was.

"I have an engagement," he said, as she rose, "to dine with a friend who has the adjoining apartment to mine. I say a friend, but he is hardly more than an acquaintance. I don't know anything in the world about him, except what I have seen. He seems to be a gentleman in a good many senses of the word, and, judging from the appearance of his rooms, I should say he is well off."

"What does he do?" Katherine asked carelessly.

"Oh, he is a scribe like myself," Gordon said with a smile. "He brought one of his



"He will not like it."

short stories to my study this morning, and asked me if I would read it and let him know this evening what I thought of it. The fellow, undoubtedly, has talent; but there is an indescribable something about him that I don't like. He doesn't seem exactly genuine. I am always suspicious, and probably sometimes unjustly so, of a man who does not look one straight in the face when talking. He has asked me several times to dine with him and I have never yet done so. I couldn't very well get out of it this time without being beastly rude."

"Well, I'm really off now, and won't bore you any longer," he continued with one hand on the knob of the door; "I will look forward with a great deal of pleasure to seeing your picture in the exhibition, and am sure it will carry off all the honors of the occasion."

Katherine returned his bow with a smile, as he closed the door behind him.

CHAP. XI.

The next morning Katherine sat at her easel, putting the finishing touches on the figure of Hester Prynne.

Cynthia, her model, was posing on the stand directly under the sky-light, in order to give Katherine the out-door effect which she wanted, and was relating some of her experiences in the studios where her face and form had been made immortal.

Agnes had gone to her music lesson, and had not seen Katherine that morning. She had told Mandy not to wake her mistress, who had complained of feeling badly the night before; but to let her sleep and to take her breakfast to her room when she should ring. All these orders had been strictly obeyed and it was nearer eleven o'clock than ten when Katherine entered her studio.

Cynthia had already donned the costume of the Puritan woman and was sitting tailor-

fashion on the rug by the hearth, reading a small volume of Ruskin on art.

"Good-morning," she said pleasantly, as she rose and replaced the book on the table. "You see I am all ready with the exception of the letter. I was afraid I wouldn't get it on straight."

Katherine greeted her cordially and having fastened the letter on Cynthia's breast, proceeded to put out some fresh color on her palette and select the brushes she would need for the morning's work. While she was thus occupied her model arranged her draperies as accurately as she could remember to the way they fell the time before, and then gathered up a cushion which was covered with a piece of loose material and tied so as to represent the tiny figure of little Pearl.

After the pose had been found, Katherine stood off for some moments from her picture, and looked at it critically with half closed eye. "I hardly think there is much I can do," she said at last. "It has always been my principle

to let well enough alone, at least I learned to after I had spoiled about thirty studies trying to improve them. It took me a long time to learn when to stop. Wait one moment, though, I think I will accent the skirt a little, it does not look quite strong enough for the rest of the figure."

"Don't do anything to spoil it, Miss Katherine," Cynthia said anxiously. "Do you know," she continued, "that I almost feel as if I had painted this picture myself, I am so interested in it and shall be so proud when it is hanging on the line in the exhibition. All the critics will stand around it and say what a genius the artist is, and lots of other nice things too. Oh! Won't it be fine? And the newspapers will give lots of space to writing it up—I know they will—and telling the people what a great artist has been discovered in New York. Please don't do too much to it, Miss Katherine, I am so afraid you might spoil it. I know I ought not to talk to you this way, but I have seen so many artists lose

the snap in their work by doing a little too much, that I am nervous about it."

"You are right, Cynthia," Katherine replied, sticking her brushes through the thumb-hole of her palette and placing it on the floor by the side of the easel.

"It's time for a rest," she continued; "come and let me know if I have improved the skirt. You ought to be a good critic,—you have seen a great many pictures and the ways of making them."

"Yes, miss, I think you have," Cynthia said, coming around in front of the easel, "but I wouldn't do any more to it, it is finished, and it is a superb piece of work. Oh, Miss Katherine!" she exclaimed, "won't that be a surprise to some of these artists in town here who have big reputations and can't paint enough to keep themselves warm? I've seen their pictures in the exhibitions. They are all licked up and bad in color and haven't any more nature in them than a church-steeple. They sell, too, just because they are nice and

clean and have pretty colors in them, while some little gem painted true as gospel will be skyed way off in a corner, and the poor artist will be half starving in some garret. It's generally the poor ones that do the best work, and that's why I thought it was so strange, Miss Katherine, when I first came to pose for you, that you could paint so strong and be so rich and beautiful at the same time. Most young ladies situated as you are don't take much to anything that requires hard work."

Katherine had turned her easel around so as to get a different effect of light on her picture and was sitting on the edge of the model stand, with her hands clasped around one knee.

"I have given up the most of my life to my art," she said, "and now it is just beginning to show me some gratitude. I have never cared much about going out, like other girls. I am happiest when I am hard at work."

Cynthia took her seat on the stand, at a

respectful distance, and began to unpin the letter on her breast.

"I will take this off now, Miss Katherine," she said, "that is if you have finished with it. It brings back to me a very sad part of my life. I didn't say anything about it before, because I thought it might worry you while you were painting."

"Certainly," Katherine replied, wondering at Cynthia's remark; "I shall not need it again."

"You know," the model said thoughtfully, "I believe that's why I could give you what you wanted for the picture of Hester Prynne. I haven't read the story for some time, but as I remember it, it is very much like mine. But that is past and gone now," she continued sorrowfully, "and I ought to forget it all. I do try, and have done my best to forgive him everything. Posing for your picture sort of brought it back to me, that's all."

She wiped away the tears from her eyes and tried to say in a more cheerful tone: "I

might get a wrong impression from someone else."

"Yes," Katherine replied thoughtfully," "that is always best."

"It is the same old story," Cynthia said, taking a long breath to strengthen her voice. "He was handsome and rich and lived uptown in fine apartments, I a poor working girl in a store. He told me that I was beautiful and that he intended to marry me and make a fine lady of me. I believed and trusted him. Of course all this turned my poor, foolish head. What chance had I ever had to know any better, born in the slums, as I was, and reared amidst poverty and all kinds of bad influences? I thought he loved me,—God knows I loved him. I love him still and would be content to go though twice the suffering I have in the past two years if he would only come and put his arms around me as he used to do and let me tell him that I forgive him everything. My child was born in a hospital. I was delirious for days and

did not get my reason back for weeks afterwards. When my senses had returned and I was once more able to realize what had passed, I asked for the child. I thought of it as my only blessing, all I had on earth, the only bond of union between us. They told me—my God it's awful," she gasped, "that I—I its own mother had killed it."

She paused and looked at Katherine, expecting to see sorrow and loathing written on her countenance, but instead she found nothing there but mercy and compassion. Taking courage, she continued:

"I lay for months in the hospital; my reason perfectly clear; my torture, therefore, all the more intense. Finally, the doctors told me I was well and must leave. Where could I go? My own parents turned me from their door; my old associates would not recognize me. I went from place to place, trying to get something to do to make a living, but everyone seemed to have heard my story, and shunned me as if I was a leper. I thought of ending my miserable existence and was often

on the point of doing so, but each time something stayed my hand, something reminded me of his words of love. Could he have meant them and been prevented in some way from coming to me. I waited for months; he did not come. I wrote and asked him in God's name to have pity on me. I received no answer. What could I do? I could not starve. I know he got my letters; they were not returned to my address on the envelopes. Well, I went from bad to worse,—it made no difference then. I knew he did not care."

She paused as if waiting for Katherine to speak, but she did not do so.

"I know you loathe and despise me," Cynthia said in a pitiful tone. "But do not cast me off. I am sure I could lead a better life, if I only had some one like you to help me. Be merciful and consider all before you judge me too harshly. Surely there is some good even in the vilest."

Katherine had arisen to her feet and now stood looking down at the miserable, penitent

woman, who had buried her face in her hands and was sobbing bitterly.

"My poor girl," Katherine said softly, placing one hand on Cynthia's head as she spoke, "I do not judge you. I am not worthy of that. I pity you from the bottom of my heart. I will do anything I can to help you lead a better life. And the man?" She asked after a pause. "What became of him?"

Cynthia raised her tear-wet eyes and looked at Katherine wonderingly.

"He is still in New York," she said at last, "I saw him just the other day go into an apartment house not two blocks from here. They tell me he is a great favorite in society, and that he writes books and makes lots of money."

"And his name?" Katherine asked nervously.

Cynthia looked at her for a moment as one pleading for mercy. She did not speak, but oh! how much one look will often express.

"You are right," Katherine said, "I should

not have asked such a question. If you still love him as you say, do nothing that will injure him. His own conscience will prove a harder judge and wound him far deeper than anything the world could say. Are you sure he received your letters? Many a life has been ruined through some mistake."

"Oh, yes," Cynthia replied wearily. "He must have gotten them. I suppose he just stopped caring for me. Perhaps he met some beautiful rich lady like you, Miss Katherine, and then what chance had a poor ignorant girl like me."

"You say it would comfort and help you," Katherine said, stroking the hair back from the poor flushed face, "to feel that someone cares what becomes of you. I care a great deal, Cynthia, and will do all I can to help you out of the path into which you have drifted, and try to make a good woman of you again."

"God bless you, miss," Cynthia said brokenly. "You don't know how much it would

"I HARDLY THINK THERE IS MUCH I CAN DO."

help me to feel that one pure, good woman did not despise such a wretched creature as me, and believed I had some good left in me. Oh! Miss Katherine, you don't *know* how I hate the life I lead. I would work my fingers to the bone if I could get honest work to do, and look the world in the face as I did before—"

"You may depend on me to help you," Katherine broke in, her own voice trembling. "Don't talk any more about it now. You are getting yourself too wrought up and nervous. Come and bathe your eyes and head. No, don't say a word of praise. Who am I, that I should judge you or anyone?"

CHAP. XII.

A few moments later Agnes came into the studio from the adjoining room, excited and flushed.

"Oh, Katherine," she broke forth, "I couldn't help hearing it all, I did not mean to listen to anything I shouldn't have heard, but when I came home you were talking to some woman in here, and I did not recognise Cynthia's voice at all, so I sat down in the next room to wait for her to go. Oh, isn't it all dreadful? To think that she has been coming here too. What are you going to do?"

"All I can to help her," Katherine replied rather stiffly.

"But she is a murderess! Surely she is beyond all redemption."

"I cannot see it in that light at all," Katherine said, her face taking on a pained expression as she spoke. "In the first place,

she is not a murderess, and in the second, if she was, I cannot see that she would be beyond all redemption.. It is true she was the cause of the child's death, but not voluntarily. Surely a merciful Providence will not hold her responsible for that. As to its birth, she has undoubtedly sinned very deeply, but not more so than the thousands of people who are living in wedlock to-day without an atom of love for one another. And this poor girl, because she dared once to let a deep and true love get the better of her, is an outcast and shunned by every one. Oh, the inhumanity of humanity!"

"But, Katherine, it was not only that once. Just think of the life she has been leading since."

"Agnes," Katherine replied hotly, rising to her feet as she spoke, "you are talking about something you cannot appreciate, and know nothing in the world about. I believe Cynthia was telling the truth when she said that she tried in every way to lead a better life and

atone for the sin she had committed, and that she was driven in desperation to lead the life she has for the past two years. Can you imagine what it means to be left starving and penniless in a city like this, without one friend to turn to, without a place to lay one's head? Suppose you had been born and reared as Cynthia was, think what you might have done under the same circumstances, before you sit in judgment on one who has gone through what that poor girl has."

Agnes bent her head in silence; her hands were lying listlessly in her lap; the tears were rising in her eyes.

"Are any of us so immaculate," Katherine continued, "that we can take it upon ourselves to condemn wrong-doing in others, perpetrated under conditions entirely foreign to our own? 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' "

Agnes looked up sorrowfully.

"Katherine," she said at last, "I am not worth bothering about. I am just a selfish,

ungrateful thing, after all you have done for me."

She rose and put both arms around Katherine's waist.

"Please don't think any more about the way I first looked at things," she said pleadingly. "I didn't understand. It all seems so different when it comes from you. You are so true and noble, and always doing something for some poor creature, and I never do good to any one. Can't I help you when you go down among the poor on Sundays. I could carry the things you take them, and feel that I was doing some little."

"Yes, dear," Katherine responded, touched by Agnes' sorrowful expression, "but the first thing to be considered is what can be done for Cynthia; how we can get work for her to do."

"I know the very thing," Agnes exclaimed after some deliberation. "She sews beautifully. She showed me some of her work one day. And Katherine, you remember that gown I told you I intended to get. I don't need it.

My other one will do just as well. The new one would cost at least thirty dollars and I can get my other made over for five, and give the rest of the money to Cynthia. She is so poor and needs it so much more than I do. I could get her to make the other gown over, too, and then she would get all the money. Won't that be fine. Let's go down to her room this afternoon and see her about it. I am so anxious to get her started. I could pay her in advance, which would help her until we can get more sewing for her to do."

"She is not starving," Katherine said repressing a smile. "I paid her for posing for me this afternoon. She has enough to last for a day or so. We will see what is best to be done before she comes again on Thursday. I know she has lots of good in her and would have made a fine woman under different circumstances. There are many cases like hers, if one could only find them out."

"Don't the charity organizations do for them?" Agnes asked.

"Oh, yes, they do a great deal of good, but I fear in cases like Cynthia's, the applicant would not stand much chance of receiving help. She would be put down as an impostor from the start. And then, too, their object is to give temporary aid until work can be found, which, if her case were considered at all, would be very hard to find. You remember, she told me how she tried to get work after she had left the hospital, and how she was turned away from every place she went."

"Yes, I do, and I feel so sorry for her," Agnes said slowly. "And, Katherine, you won't think any more of the way I first looked at the matter, will you? I am just a narrow minded little goose and didn't know what I was talking about. I won't air my opinions any more. I will come to you first. You are always right and look at everything in such a beautiful, Christian way."

"I am not so sure of that, my little girl," Katherine responded, "but I do believe in thinking well of every one until we have good

reason to believe otherwise, and in not being too hasty to condemn faults in others, which more than likely are offset by graver ones in ourselves. Circumstances have brought poor Cynthia down to where she is, and we must try and see what can be done. I believe there is more good than evil in her and that she will eventually turn out to be a fine woman if we will use our influence to make her so."

CHAP. XIII.

That evening at dinner, Agnes was more quiet than usual. There was evidently something in her mind that was worrying her greatly. She ate little and talked less, and not until the coffee had been brought on and the maid had left the room, did she satisfy Katherine's mind as to the cause of her trouble.

"Katherine," she said rather abruptly, setting her cup down a little harder than is generally considered to be good for Dresden, "after I went to my room this afternoon I got to thinking about Cynthia, and something is worrying me very much. I remember what you said about thinking well of every one until we had good reason to believe otherwise, and I am going to try hard to adopt that plan; but something struck me so forcibly, that I thought I would speak to you about it. You

can reason things out so much better than I can. Do you remember what Cynthia said about—about the man?" she stammered.

"Yes."

"How he wrote books and went out a great deal and—and she saw him going into an apartment house two blocks from here?"

"I remember all that," Katherine replied slowly, "and I think I can divine what is worrying you so. The evidence is very damaging, to say the least. But I don't believe it and wouldn't unless he told me so with his own lips."

"And I don't either," Agnes said brokenly, "but wouldn't it only be fair to Arthur to clear the whole matter up. I don't believe it, indeed I don't, Katherine, but I do think it would be so much better, if there wasn't any doubt about it."

"I know what you mean," Katherine replied after hesitating for a moment, "and looking at it in that light, I do think it would be much better, but I don't exactly see how it

could be done. I don't believe it and wouldn't for the world let Arthur think I had the slightest suspicion of him, and if you had seen Cynthia's expression when I thoughtlessly asked her the name of the man, you would have been convinced that she would never tell. Poor girl, whatever she may be, she surely has shown unbounded mercy."

"I do not believe it any more than you do," Agnes replied earnestly, "but suppose Cynthia should tell others as much as she has you, and they should suspect Arthur. You know how a thing of this kind is twisted and changed in passing from one person to another. Oh, Katherine, that would be awful, and, if it should get back to Arthur, he never would get over it. I'm sure he wouldn't."

"I might ask Cynthia," Katherine said thoughtfully, "not to say anything about it to any one, not even as much as she did to me. If she promises I do not believe she would tell it. That, however, would not remove the doubt you suggest. I do not see

any way out of it, Agnes. I am very much afraid you will have to continue to doubt Arthur for the rest of your life."

"*I* don't doubt him, Katherine. It's not that, but Cynthia's story was so apropos that I couldn't help thinking, and I still think, it would be better, for Arthur's sake, to put him beyond all suspicion. If an opportunity presents itself you wouldn't blame me for taking advantage of it, would you?"

"Not in the least, but I can't see in what possible way you could do it, unless Arthur should run across her in my studio some day. Even then, if there should be the thousandth part of a chance of his having had anything to do with it, I am sure Cynthia would not let on in the slightest possible way."

"I wish I hadn't heard Cynthia's story," Agnes said regretfully, "at least that part of it. I am afraid, as you say, there won't be any way of clearing it up, and it just makes me uncomfortable."

"Well, dear," Katherine responded, "why don't you try to think nothing more about it.

You say that you don't believe it. That should be sufficient."

"Yes, I know it ought, Katherine, but I just can't help it. Anything like that worries me dreadfully until it is entirely cleared up, and I am afraid that will be a long time and probably never."

"I'm afraid so," Katherine replied.

CHAP. XIV.

"Do you realize, Katherine," said Agnes, looking up from her book as they sat in the library later that evening, "that Arthur has not been near us for a week? Something must be wrong. I know he wouldn't act this way if there wasn't."

"It does seem a little strange," Katherine said, "but I do not think there is any occasion for you to worry. I never saw a man who was more able to take care of himself than Arthur, and if he was sick I think he would certainly send us a note."

"But he might be too sick to write it," Agnes suggested. "Oh! I think it's horrid to be a girl. If I was a man, now, I'd just put on my hat and coat, walk right around there, get in the elevator, go up to his rooms and say 'Hello! Gordon, old chap, why haven't you been around to see a fellow?' and he'd say,

'Hello! old man, I'm awfully glad to see you. Sit down and have a pipe. I *was* coming around last night, but I had so deuced much work to do I couldn't get away'—and that would be the end of it. Instead, I am a girl and have to sit and fret just because a lot of old gossips raise their hands in holy horror at the slightest unconventional thing a girl does. Oh, I think it's horrid, I do indeed. I'd a great deal rather be a man, anyhow. Wouldn't you, Katherine?"

"Well, yes, for a great many reasons I think I would," Katherine replied laughingly, "and for a great many others I would not. A man has to accomplish so much more than a woman to get the same amount of credit."

"And the woman has to do twice the amount of work to earn the same amount of money," Agnes broke in. "Men have the best of us in more ways than one."

"Don't you think we had better write a note to Arthur?" she continued, after a short pause. "I am awfully worried and—and you

don't seem to be a bit. I thought you were fond of Arthur. I know he is of you, he has told me so."

Katherine raised her eyes slowly.

"Fond of him," she repeated, "Agnes, that is a queer way for you to talk to me. You know I am fond of him. He is all that I could wish for in a man, and that is saying a great deal."

"I should think, then," Agnes replied thoughtfully, "that you would love him."

"Do you?" Katherine questioned.

"Not in the way I would like you to. He seems like a brother to me. I want you to love him with your whole soul, and marry him. Oh, Katherine, it would be the best thing in the world for you. You would be the making of one another. Just think what great books Arthur could write with your influence to help him, and what great illustrations you could make for them. And I could come and live with you in the winters—that is if you should want me,—and pose for some of the

characters in the stories—if they should happen to have anything like me in them,—and everything would go right then."

Katherine bent her head and was listening attentively to all her little friend was saying.

"Agnes," she said at last, raising her eyes as she spoke, "I am not cold and indifferent as you often suppose me to be, I can love like other women if I dared do so, but there is a stain upon my life which prevents me ever giving myself to any man, to be, perhaps, the mother of innocent children who might some day learn the truth, and turn against me and justly curse me for their very existence. No! No! Anything but that."

"Katherine, dear, don't talk that way. You frighten me," Agnes replied nervously. "One would think, to hear you, that you had committed some awful crime. You should not make yourself the victim of a deed which you are in no way responsible for. There is no justice in the visitation of the sins of fathers upon the innocent heads of those they bring into this world."

Katherine sat silent with her face turned sorrowfully away.

"You have told me," Agnes continued, "that your secret is known to you alone. Why, then, should you ruin your life for something you are in no way responsible for, and which can never be learned unless you so desire it. Could you trust me, Katherine? If so, tell me what it is. I am sure I could comfort and help you. I am not the narrow minded girl I was."

"I trust you, dear. It is not that," Katherine replied bitterly. "It's fear that keeps me back—fear that you—you might hate me for what I have done. Heredity, as you suppose, is not the cause of all my mental torture. I alone am guilty."

She paused and turned to Agnes, who was looking at her intently with a troubled, perplexed expression.

"Come, dear," she said, rising from her chair, "let's write the note to Arthur. I fear he must be sick, as you suggest."

AGNES

(After a Portrait by Katherine Montressor.)

Agnes raised the hand that was lying listlessly on her shoulder and pressed it fervently to her lips.

"Katherine," she said, at last, "you have always looked upon me as a child. I do not wonder at it. In fact I was, until the day Cynthia told her sad story. You taught me then not to look down upon, and turn with loathing from, those who have repented and in their very agony cry to us for help. Forgive me, Katherine, I love you more, if possible, than I ever did before. Nothing shall ever come between us now."

Katherine bent and pressed one long and fervent kiss upon the upturned forehead.

"God bless you, little girl," she murmured, "and may He make me grateful for the blessing He has given me in you, my only earthly comfort."

Agnes made no answer. A great lump was rising in her throat. Her heart was too full for utterance. She could only draw her friend down closer to her breast and wait until her emotion had spent itself.

When Katherine raised her head her eyes were wet with tears. Her first that Agnes had ever seen.

"Come, dear," she said slowly, "let's write the note to Arthur now. I was more worried than I let you know."

As Agnes rose to get her pen there was a strong ring at the bell.. "That sounds like Arthur now," she exclaimed; "I know his ring."

They looked at each other with that indescribable expression, as only women can when the unexpected happens, and the servant announced Mr. Gordon.

"It has been a long time since we have seen you," Katherine said, advancing and holding out her hand to him as she spoke. "We had both become most anxious, and were on the point of writing you a note. I hope you have not been sick."

"No, not exactly," Gordon said, taking her hand, then turning to Agnes, who was awaiting her turn with both hands extended.

"Oh, I think you are awful," she said, with a coquettish little smile, "to leave two helpless women to the mercy of a city like this. I imagined all sorts of dreadful things had happened to you; that you were drowned in East River, or murdered for your watch, or something of the kind. Where *have* you been since,—well, it's really been so long ago, I can't remember."

"I had no idea my absence would make so much difference here," Gordon replied, good naturedly, glancing at Katherine as he spoke. "It has not been from choice, but compulsion," he continued, taking a chair near the divan, on which both girls had seated themselves.

"The man who did the compelling must have been a big one," Agnes said smilingly; "tell us all about it. I'm sure it must be interesting."

"In a way it is," Gordon said, "but, at the same time, very sad. The literary man, I told you about," he continued, turning to Katherine as he spoke, "was brought home very

badly hurt the evening after I was last here. About six o'clock the afternoon of the accident, his horse returned to the stable with his right fore-hoof bespattered with blood. As there was not even so much as a scratch on him, suspicion was naturally aroused as to the welfare of the rider. Two men from the stable took a buggy and went out a road which, luckily, the unfortunate man had said he intended taking that afternoon.

"It was long after dark before they found him lying prostrate by the side of the road, with a very ugly wound in the head, evidently made by a blow from one of the horse's front feet. After the wounded man had been taken home, the doctor made a thorough examination of his injuries, and found that his back was broken, the skull slightly fractured, and that he was suffering from some serious internal injuries. Poor fellow; he is in a pretty bad way. I do not think he will last long."

"Oh, that's dreadful," Katherine exclaimed. "Is there no hope for him?"

"The doctor says he can't tell yet," Gordon replied, "and that all depends on careful nursing. The patient is conscious but seems to be unable to relate any of the circumstances of his accident. All he will say about it is, that it was all his fault; that he shouldn't have tried it; that he might have known it was too much for poor old Ronsfere, from which we imagine he was trying to jump his horse over a five rail fence that skirts the road where he was found, which was more than the animal could clear. Poor fellow! he suffers terribly."

"I am distressed," Katherine said. "Is there nothing in the world I can do? Poor man, how he must suffer. Are any of his family with him? Has he a mother or sister, and have they been sent for?"

"Not a soul," Gordon answered. "As soon as he was able to speak without great effort, I asked him if I could send for any one. A sorrowful shake of the head was his only reply. I have been with him night and day for nearly a week, with the exception of a few hours'

sleep. At night he becomes delirious, and raves in a distressing way. It is pitiable to hear him. His ravings are about some woman, but so inarticulate that I can make very little out of them."

"Perhaps they are about one who loves him and who should be at his bedside," Katherine said earnestly. "Do your best to learn her name, and bring them together. It might save the poor fellow's life."

"I will," Gordon replied solemnly.

"How is the music coming along, Agnes?" he continued, desirous of changing the subject. "I have been longing to hear you play Chopin again; I don't know when I have enjoyed anything as much."

"I am still hard at it," she replied, trying to conceal the tremor in her voice, for which Gordon's affecting story of the accident was responsible. "I shall be delighted," she continued, "to play for you again any afternoon you may suggest. Mannetti is very complimentary, and predicts all kinds of a future for

me, but you know what these foreigners are, when it comes to making pretty speeches to women. I am afraid their compliments have to be taken with many more than one grain of salt."

"But there are a great many others who agree with your master in his predictions," Gordon rejoined. "I have heard your praises sounded by those whose opinions I put as much confidence in as I do in his, and who are *not* given to making pretty speeches to women."

"But who may be to men, when speaking of their friends," Agnes replied with a smile.

"Well," Gordon said carelessly, "there is nothing like being modest where one's talent is concerned. It is a sure way to learn, when coupled with hard work."

"There is no dearth of the latter in Agnes' case," Katherine remarked. "I am afraid she will kill herself if she continues to study as hard as she has been doing lately. Don't you think she is looking badly?"

"No; I can't say that I do," Gordon replied, looking at Agnes as he spoke. "On the contrary, I think she looks stouter every time I see her."

"Oh, lovely!" Agnes exclaimed, rising to her feet as she spoke. "I will say good night after that," she continued; "I am afraid you might retract it, and then, too, I am sadly in need of something which is a very necessary article nowadays. It is commonly called beauty sleep. No! Don't. I know I brought it on myself," she said smilingly as he was about to reply, "the water is much too shallow. Good night. Let me know about the Chopin. Any afternoon you say, I shall be delighted. Good night, Katherine."

"Good night, dear," the latter responded, as the portieres came together.

CHAP. XV.

"It seems a long time since I last saw you," Gordon said earnestly after some time of silence, "and in reality it has only been a little over a week. This may appear to you a rather youthful way of talking but it proves more to me than you might imagine."

Katherine said nothing. She felt, from the seriousness of his expression and the earnestness of his voice, that the painful scene which she knew must come sooner or later was near at hand.

"You have known for some time," he said after a constrained pause, "that I love you. You couldn't help seeing that. I have kept silent just as long as I could. I cannot any longer. I have loved you ever since the first day I saw you, four years ago."

"Would to heaven you had declared it then," she murmured faintly, then raised her eyes to his and shook her head sorrowfully.

"Katherine, I cannot live without you. Give me just one ray of hope, something to work all the harder for and bring out the best that is in me. Think, before you ruin my life and crush out of me all hope, all ambition. You are generous, you are merciful. I have seen it in all your actions, even to the most miserable of wretches begging on the streets. With a promise from your lips nothing could be too great to accomplish for your dear sake. I would go to the very gates of hell itself to win you, and will not claim you until I have accomplished something which would make my name worthy for you to take. Katherine, think what you are doing. Do you not care some little for me?"

His face was so earnest, so full of manly tenderness, strength and love, that she longed to throw herself upon his mercy, and tell him all. The stronger side of her nature, however, quickly predominated.

"You are asking something, Arthur," she said slowly, "that is beyond my power to

grant. I love you. I am not ashamed to acknowledge it, and will do all in my power to help you achieve your highest ambition."

Gordon sprang to his feet in an ecstasy of joy. His face was radiant with manly triumph and new born hope.

"You say that you love me, Katherine. That being so, what else can stand between us?"

"Yes, I love you," she repeated, "but I can never marry you."

"I do not understand," he said, reseating himself in front of her, his face resuming its grave expression. "If you love me, nothing should stand between us. You mean that you do not love me in a way that warrants marriage, that your love contains no passion. Oh, Katherine, do not tell me that! I cannot live without you."

"No, Arthur, you do me an injustice; I love you with all the strength and passion my woman's soul is capable of. You can surely see it; there is no use in me trying to conceal it from you. Would to God it were not so. As

you are a man, strong and well able to cope with the temptations of this life, help me to do what is right. My reasons are adequate. I know the path to take; the one which will be best for both of us. Help me. I am only a woman."

He bent his head in silence.

"Arthur," she continued, "do not think me cruel. I am only acting for the best. You say that I would help you to accomplish what you have been striving for for years; that I would be the making of you. I am convinced that our marriage would ruin your career. You do not know. You do not know."

"Katherine," he asked rather abruptly, "is there any legal reason why you should not marry me?"

"No; there is a stain upon my life which makes it impossible for me to give myself to any man."

"I know," he said gravely, "what you refer to. Agnes has told me much of your past life. I know the circumstances of your father's

death. Katherine, if I am willing to put aside all such reasons, what right have you or has any one to question an action of my own which concerns me alone."

"It is not as you suppose, Arthur. You do not know what you are saying," she replied bitterly. "Would to God it were so easily put aside."

"Nor do I wish to know," he said, rising to his feet, "my love is strong enough to crush out any prejudice. I would marry you to-morrow for better or for worse. Katherine, consent; put all the past aside; give me your promise, and I will swear that so far as it is in my power, you shall never regret one moment of the time as long as you live. Do not drive me to desperation. You say that you love me; that being so, you are mine by divine right. No earthly power should keep us apart."

"I cannot consent," she said slowly. "You do not know what you are saying. If you love me as you say you do, and I believe it with all

my heart, leave me now and do not talk this way again. It is harder for me to bear than it is for you. I am the cause of it all."

"Katherine," he said gravely, "suppose this stain, as you have called it, had come in to my life, do you think that I would act as you are doing? No; I would not. I would try to forget it all—we cannot alter the past,—and make my future as best I could."

"Oh, yes," she replied bitterly, "it's all so different with a man."

"Granting that that is so," he said, "I cannot see, looking at it from a moral standpoint, that there should be any difference drawn. The very men who lead the wildest lives are the first to condemn some thoughtless act in woman. Whatever this accursed thing may be, the world will never be the wiser. Katherine, you are unreasonable,—the first time I have ever known you so. Put this foolish prejudice aside, and promise to be my wife."

"I cannot Arthur," she said slowly.

"Do you realize what you are doing?" he

asked earnestly, rising as he spoke. "Do you know what all this means to me?"

She made no answer, but sat pale as death itself, staring fixedly in front of her.

He waited some seconds for her to reply, then moved slowly towards the door.

"Good-night," he said bitterly, "I must now go back to sit up with my wounded friend. It will be a long and dreary vigil, I assure you."

Katherine realized nothing until she heard the door close and his footsteps descending the granite steps outside.

"Arthur," she gasped, "come back! I have something to say to you! Arthur! Arthur!"

The sound of his footsteps grew fainter and fainter, and she threw herself back on the cushions, with one long smothered sob.

CHAP. XVI.

Two weeks later, Cynthia was seated in one of her two cozy rooms which Katherine had procured for her and furnished nicely. A bright fire was burning in a cheerful little open stove, and the warm rays of the sun were pouring in through the window, beside which she was sitting, busily engaged in finishing a piece of embroidery. It was a table scarf of rich red silk, on which she had wrought an Eastern design, curious and grotesque in pattern, in many delicate shades, each and every one of which blended delightfully with the brilliant tone of the background.

Hanging in the sunlight, by the side of the window near Cynthia, was a chirpy little canary. He was hopping from perch to perch in his cage of shining metal, and trilling away in his own bird language, as much as to say, "I am so glad I am not out in the cold like

other birds, and have some one to take care of all my wants."

The lines in Cynthia's face, which dissipation and hardship had put there, were already beginning to disappear. She felt that she had now something to live for; that there was someone who took an interest in her; that she could look the world in the face once more, and say, I am earning my living by honest work. I am entitled to some respect from my fellow beings.

"That will please dear Miss Katherine, I hope," she said to herself, as she threw the table scarf over the back of a chair. "She is fond of red, and I think it will go with the furniture and hangings in her library." She then rose, and stood off some little distance, to contemplate the effect. "It is a trifle to what she has done for me; but I may be able, some day, to show her how much I appreciate all her kindness."

After she had taken up the scarf and carefully clipped off all the straggling threads

from the wrong side, she folded it neatly and tied it up in white tissue paper with a narrow red ribbon.

"Now, Dick," she said to the canary, a few moments later, "I am going out, and I want you to be a good bird until I get back. You may sing and hop about as much as you choose, but don't scatter seed on my new carpet. Do you understand?"

Dick, with his head on one side at a saucy angle, looked as if he understood perfectly; but, at the same time, very much as if he intended to do exactly as he pleased.

"Now see that you mind," Cynthia said, as she closed the door behind her.

She found Katherine in her studio, standing in front of a large canvas, while Agnes was posing on the model stand, dressed in a quaint short waisted gown, with a large frill running completely around the square cut neck. She looked as if she had just stepped out of a portrait painted one hundred years ago. A broad sash encircled her just beneath

the bust and was tied in the back in two great loops which gave it the appearance of a huge butterfly, about to take flight. Her hair was tucked high up on the head, and was entwined artistically with some old-fashioned beads which Katherine had brought from the Manor. A pair of red, high-heeled slippers and a quaint old-fashioned spangled fan she held in one hand, completed the costume.

"You are just the one I wanted to see," Katherine exclaimed, as Cynthia entered the studio. "I have been struggling with this foreshortened arm for an hour at least, and it *won't* come right. Come; tell me what the trouble is. I do believe some good angel sent you here."

"And I believe that every time I come, Miss Katherine," Cynthia replied, with a smile; then, turning to Agnes, "Oh, that's charming. How beautifully the gown tones in with the background, and the pose, too, is delightful, chic and Frenchy. What a stunning canvas it will make. You should never wear any

other costume, Miss Agnes. You would have all the millionaires at your feet, if they could see you at this present moment."

"I would like to change these slippers first," Agnes replied laughingly, "for I am sure, with these high heels, I would fall over on some of them."

"They wouldn't mind," Katherine said, falling into the humor of the remark. "Now Cynthia," she continued, "tell me what the trouble is with the arm. It don't seem to hang with the rest of the drawing, and has given me more trouble than the rest of the figure put together."

Cynthia viewed the offending member critically, holding up a pencil at arm's length, and taking its horizontal and vertical relations to other points as she did so.

"It's not much out, Miss Katherine," she said finally. "It appears to me to be a little long from the shoulder to the elbow. I think if you will make the forearm a little longer it will proportion better. It looks weak for

the other one. The rest of the drawing is stunning. You have caught the spirit of your model beautifully. It looks quite like Sargent's work."

"I wish I could think so," Katherine replied, taking up a large chamois skin, as she spoke, and dusting off the charcoal, in order to make the correction. I *do* think I have succeeded in getting those folds quite true, the head seems good in action. Don't you think I am working more freely than I did?"

"Indeed I do, you are making big strides on every canvas you paint. Your last picture is always the finest, and the best part of it is that you are never satisfied with your work."

"Well, I suppose there is still hope for me," Katherine said, with a good natured little laugh. "Come, look at the arm now. It is better, I think."

"It's a different thing," Cynthia said, taking another look at the drawing. "It took so little to fix it, too. I wouldn't put another stroke on it, miss, indeed I wouldn't. It's all

ready for the paint. I hope you will get the freedom in the finished portrait that you have here. It's fine."

"I will try hard to," Katherine replied. "Now, my little lady-bug," she continued, turning to Agnes, "you had better take a long rest. I am sure you must be worn out. You have been up there nearly three-quarters of an hour."

"I am not a bit tired," Agnes replied. "Are you quite sure you can stop now? All right then, I will get down now and walk around a little. One does get cramped, holding the same position for some time."

"Where is your picture of the 'Scarlet Letter,' Miss Katherine? I don't see it anywhere around," Cynthia asked.

"Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you. I sent it to the Academy yesterday, which was the last day for receiving. The judges decide next Tuesday and Wednesday. I do hope they will be lenient and," with a smile, "give a new fellow a chance. I am afraid they are some-

what partial to the older workers, though, are they not?"

"The young ones all say so," Cynthia replied, "but, from what I've learned, I believe they try to be fair to every one. I heard a young artist who had been turned down year after year say once he thought the only way to get an impartial judgment on a lot of pictures would be to have them signed on the backs and the names of the painters kept from the members of the committee until they had passed their opinions."

"I don't know but that he is right," Katherine replied, "there would then be very little chance for partiality, except where the technique could be recognized."

"But that could be done very easily," Cynthia said, crossing the room as she spoke. "Some of the committee have been there for a long time and can recognize an artist's work in a minute."

"Here is something for you," she continued, after she had come back to where Kath-

erine was seated. "I made it myself. Please don't open it until I have gone. I am afraid you might thank me for it, and I don't deserve it. If I worked the rest of my life for you, I couldn't half repay you for all you have done for me. I thought it might tone in well in your library, and hope you will like it."

"I am sure I shall," Katherine replied, raising the package from her lap where Cynthia had laid it, "but you shouldn't have taken all that trouble. I won't open it now, but I will thank you for it. I am sure it is some of your beautiful needle-work, and just what I want. You shouldn't have done it, Cynthia; you are working too hard now. I haven't a doubt you sat up late at night, making it."

"Miss Katherine, please don't talk that way," Cynthia said. "As if anything could be a trouble to me, when doing it for you. I'd lay my life right down at your feet, if I thought you wanted me to. I never can repay you for all you have done for me."

"It more than repays me," Katherine an-

swered, "to see you bright and happy, and leading a useful life."

Just then Agnes, who had been at the window for some little time, turned and said quickly: "Come here, Cynthia. Hurry, come quickly. Do you see that man on the other side of the street? The tall one, with the frock coat and silk hat," she asked nervously.

"Yes, miss, I do," Cynthia replied.

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"I cannot say. It is very hard to tell, looking down on a person. The hat is in the way. I cannot see him well."

At that moment Arthur Gordon looked up towards the window, and, seeing Agnes standing there, raised his hat.

"No," Cynthia said, "I have never laid eyes on him before."

CHAP. XVII.

Katherine's picture of the "Scarlet Letter" has not only been accepted, but hung "on the line" in a place of honor opposite the entrance to the main gallery. The exhibition is open, the day is a bright dry one, and the lovers of the beautiful have come in full force to see what is in store for them on the walls of the National Academy of Design.

On hearing the verdict of the committee about her work, and that it had been hung as it was, Katherine decided not to go to the gallery for several days after its opening. She knew that she would meet many of her former art associates there, and feared that they would talk much to her about the "Scarlet Letter," and attract attention in the crowd, all of which she wished to avoid. Cynthia was one of the first to enter the building when the doors were thrown open to the public.

She had taken a seat on one of the large sofas in the centre of the gallery, nearly opposite the "Scarlet Letter." Here she had remained the entire morning, making mental notes of all she could hear in praise of Katherine's triumph.

Her blood tingled for joy when she heard men, ripe in years and of much experience in the painter's craft, speaking in the highest possible terms of Katherine's work. They would look admiringly at it, then turn to some fellow artist, and say, "Very well done, shows genius, strong in drawing, fine composition," while the smaller fry stood around by the hour, gazing with admiration and envy at the pinnacle to which their former class-mate had soared.

The newspapers, as Cynthia had predicted, were lavish in their praises. Of the few pictures to which separate headings and much space were of necessity given, the "Scarlet Letter" headed the list. Critics who, as a rule, could see but little good in American art, were

of but one opinion as to Katherine's picture,—that it was marvelous. Its fame was rapidly spreading. Journals of other cities were sending their correspondents to New York to gather information. Each mail would bring Katherine letters from various clipping bureaus in different parts of the country. Long and flowery letters, telling what a great source of pleasure it would be to their writers to gather and send to her the various articles which were being published in their cities and elsewhere about the "Scarlet Letter;" of course not omitting the exact amount it would cost her to give them this particular pleasure.

Gordon had been to the exhibition, and heard much of Katherine's triumph. He felt, when he heard one of the strongest painters in New York say that her work contained genius, and would stand the test of being hung in any gallery of the day, that he, too, had achieved a crowning success. He loved her all the more for the laurels she had recently

won, and for the way she had so bravely sacrificed herself because she thought it was best for him and for his future. He had thought much since he had last seen her about the stand she had taken, and was more and more convinced that it was due to the over-sensitive way she looked at matters.

"What right have I," he argued with himself, "to demand more than I give. She is many times better than I, whatever she may have done." He, therefore, determined, as soon as possible to return to her, and make his plea all the stronger; to show her that nothing could shake his purpose, and that he was determined to have her at any cost.

All this was burning in Gordon's brain as he walked home from the exhibition.

Although the streets were crowded, as is usual at that hour, and many of his friends were among those he passed, he was hardly conscious of his surroundings. More than once, he was nearly run down by the passing vehicles, as he crossed the crowded thorough-

fares. He was sensible of little but his intention to overcome all her prejudices; how, or in what way, would be best to accomplish this, his fevered brain could not determine. He knew how strong a character she possessed, and how hard it was to break down any point she should make, believing herself to be in the right.

Before reaching his apartment an idea struck him.

"What if I could," he thought, "persuade Katherine to tell me what it is in her life which she thinks would ruin mine, and let me judge for myself. Surely she would not withstand if I were willing to waive it all."

Still deep in thought, as he left the elevator to go to his rooms, he was accosted by his sick friend's valet.

"Mr. Gordon," the latter said, in a whisper, "I have been looking for you, sir. The lawyer has been here for some time, and would like you as a witness to the will. Mr. Frank is very low and seemed particular worried about

something this morning after you left. He told me to send for his lawyer, and I thought it best to do it, sir. He seemed so nervous and fretful like, that I thought if I didn't do it, it might have bad consequences."

Gordon made no reply, but turned and entered the sick room quietly, followed by the valet.

The patient had just affixed his signature to his will, and was being lowered gently on his pillow by the kindly old physician, who had worked hard, and taxed his skill, which was great, to its utmost in order to prolong the life of the wounded man, who was now beyond all hope of recovery.

The lawyer, a lean and lank individual of much self importance, was seated at a small table by the side of the bed. The portion of his face which was not covered by a thin reddish brown beard was pale and emaciated; the nose, which was thin and narrow, inclined a little in favor of the right side before it came to a point. His small watery eyes were set close together, and did not rest in any one

place for more than a second or two, but moved nervously from object to object. In his right hand, two fingers of which were much stained owing to excessive cigarette smoking, he held a penknife, and was endeavoring to erase from the will a blot caused by the shaking hand of the dying man. The blot seemed to be giving him much more anxiety than did the condition of the latter. After it had been removed as far as possible without causing a hole through the paper, he raised his head with a jerk, and said with a quick nervous indrawing of the breath, as if shivering, "Mr. Gordon, your signature here, if you please."

Gordan gave him one glance of mingled contempt and disgust, then took the pen and hurriedly affixed his signature.

"Dr. Bollingbroke, yours beneath it," in the same tone used towards Gordon.

He then folded the will carefully, and placed it in a large yellow envelope, which he proceeded to put into his pocket.

"Gordon," the dying man said feebly, "I

would like you to take charge of that, and see that it is carried out to the letter. I have mentioned the name of one particularly; she is in this city. Find her—and tell her—tell her —," he gasped, "that—oh! I am in such agony; raise me just—a—a little, so—so I can get my breath. That's better, now I—I can speak. Tell her that my dying words are for her forgiveness. Ask her," he continued in a whisper, "in Christ's name to forgive me all the wrong I have done her. Say that what I have left will take her out of the misery into which I have placed her. That is all—that is all."

Gordon lowered him gently, and took the withered hand within his own. In the silence which followed, the breathing of the dying man could be heard to grow fainter and fainter. His grasp grew weak, and the breath came in gasps; until the last,—that awful gasp which separates the soul from the body—shook the whole frame, in one great convulsion, and stopped the heart—forever.

CHAP. XVIII.

Early the next Friday evening, Katherine was sitting all alone in her cozy library. Mandy had drawn the curtains and lighted the lamps, and turned them down, so that only a soft diffused light filled the room.

Agnes had gone to Plainfield, to spend Sunday with some friends, and Katherine had just begun to realize how much she was going to miss her for the next two or three days.

She had not spent much time at dinner that evening. She found that eating by one's self was something to be done more as a necessity than anything else, and she was now feeling a trifle lost, not knowing exactly what to do with herself, for usually at that hour, Agnes would play softly on the piano in the studio, while she listened and rested after the long day's work at her painting.

She wished, half unconsciously for Gordon. She had missed him greatly for the past two

weeks, and to-night she missed him more than ever. She had many things she wanted to ask his advice about, and many new ideas she wanted to discuss with him. "I must stop this," she said to herself, starting to her feet. "I have done what was right, where he was concerned at least, and that alone must be my consolation."

She walked the floor for some time, trying to calm her nerves and stop the throbbing in her breast. She then took a photograph of Gordon from a drawer in her desk and stood for some moments looking at it intently. "How bitter the best often is," she said to herself. With a sorrowful shake of the head, she replaced the photograph in the drawer, and, returning to her seat, gave herself up to reflection. "Am I acting for the best?" she thought bitterly. "Is there not more chance of my ruining his life through the course I am pursuing than if I take the one he plead so earnestly for? Did he not tell me to put all the past out of my life; that he would marry me for better or for worse."

The color flushed to her face, her heart beat violently, and again she rose and paced the floor with quick and nervous step. Under the lace scarf which encircled her shoulders and then fell gracefully over the front of her gown of crimson her breath came and went quickly. With hands clasped tightly behind her, her head thrown back, her dark eyes flashing, she looked the very essence of all that is vigorous in womanhood. Her beauty had touched its height.

She was conscious of nothing except that she loved him with her whole heart and soul, and for the time she felt the supreme happiness that only such a full surrender to love can give. But in a moment the past rushed back, bringing with it pain and sorrow; all vivacity, life and passion vanished from her face in an instant; the horror of it all overwhelmed her, and she sank heavily back into her chair.

Here she sat as one condemned to death, conscious of nothing except that she was unworthy of the love her inmost soul craved;

that she must turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of the one man in the world to her.

Was it not worse than death?

Had she not been so thoroughly engrossed in her own sad thoughts, she would have heard the outer door close, and a man's footsteps cross the hall which led to the library; but she realized nothing else until she looked up and saw Gordon standing in the doorway.

"You!" she said with a start, rising from her chair as she spoke. "How long had you been there?"

"Only a moment," he replied as he came towards her. "I was just about to speak, when you looked up."

"Oh," she said in a tone of relief, "I am all alone to-night, and was sitting here, lost in thought. You have come just in time to take me out of myself."

"I am glad of that," he replied smilingly. "It is always pleasant to be of service to one's friends, however little that service may be."

"And do you hold my feelings so lightly?"

"Not at all, you misunderstood me. I meant the service, not your feelings."

"Oh, that's better," she said, attempting a smile.

"How is your friend who was hurt so badly?" she asked after some time of silence.

"He was buried yesterday," Gordon replied gravely, "and I think it was a blessing that he did not live to continue suffering. There was no hope of his ever being any better."

"Poor fellow!" Katherine murmured.

"The funeral was one of the saddest I have ever witnessed," he continued,—"only a very few present, and but one woman. From her alone came the sobs of unspeakable grief. She was very heavily veiled, and no one seemed to know who she was. She said nothing, and left as quietly as she came."

"She spoke the truth, poor girl, when she told me she loved him," Katherine said softly.

"Do you know who it could have been?" Gordon asked, with interest.

"No, but I have a strong suspicion."

"Would you, would any man?"

"Then perhaps you can help me," he said, drawing a card from his pocket as he spoke. "I have been left executor of the will, and have been instructed to find a certain woman who lives here in New York. The most of the property is left to her, and I am anxious to get it into her hands. She is an artist's model, I believe, which made me think you might have heard of her. Her name is Cynthia Cole."

"I expected as much," Katherine answered. "Yes, I know her very well. She is the one who posed for my figure of Hester Prynne, and I can tell you where to find her. I am so glad," she continued, "that he at last tried to atone for all the wrong he had done this poor girl. It will be such a comfort to her for the rest of her life to know that he had some little appreciation for all he knew she must have suffered, and for the unbounded mercy she showed towards him."

"Was it as bad as all that?" Gordon asked gravely.

"Yes, as bad as it is possible for anything to be. He not only ruined, but deserted her; and while delirious in a hospital she killed her child."

"Horrible!" Gordon exclaimed, "what a terrible thing life must be to one who has to bear the taint of blood guiltiness to the grave."

"And yet," Katherine said earnestly, "you surely would not hold her responsible. She did not know what she was doing. To vary the case somewhat," she continued after a pause, "do you not think that a man or woman can be so goaded and tortured by another that, in order to protect what is dearest of all on earth to him or her, may kill, blindly, in a mad fury of rage, the wretch who provokes them."

"I think," Gordon replied, wondering at her earnestness, "that a woman should always protect her honor at any cost."

"But," said Katherine, rising to her feet, and looking down on him, her face full of intense feeling, "suppose it is the honor of one

whom they love better than life itself, are they justified then?"

"That is a question which requires a great deal of thought," he replied after deliberation. "I could not answer unless I heard all the circumstances of such a case."

She looked at him with eager gaze, as if trying to read his inmost thoughts.

"Arthur," she said at last, "you are, I know, a man of honor. I can trust you implicitly; I feel it in all your words and actions. I am going to tell you something which has never escaped my lips before, and which is known to me alone. As you are strong, be merciful."

She paused to catch her breath. Her colorless lips trembled, and her face grew ghastly white. She reeled, and would have fallen had he not sprung forward and caught her in his arms.

"Wait!" she almost screamed. "Not yet; not yet; wait until you know all, and then see if you wish to touch me."

He drew back. He felt that he was face to face with the supreme moment of his life. He could only look at her, wondering at her beauty, and wait for her to speak.

She stood looking straight at him, her arms hanging at her sides, her flame-colored gown falling in graceful folds around her, her head back, with its dark hair massed high upon it like a crown, her fair white breast rising and falling, her very soul shining through her eyes. She looked more like a goddess to be worshipped than one who plead for mercy; and then she spoke: "Agnes has told you the world's version of my father's death. I alone can tell you the truth. The world thinks he committed suicide; he did not; he was killed. I will tell you how."

She stopped and gasped again for breath.

"You have learned how he goaded and tortured my mother. He seemed to live solely to make her life a living hell. For years she bore his cruelty without a murmur, then she died. Shortly after her death, when I was

half crazed with grief, he sent for me. I found him in his study. His pistol, which he always kept loaded, was lying on the table beside him. In order to get the entire property away from me, so that he could bring some profligate woman, his mistress, to live with him, he told me with a sneering smile—oh, my God, how can I tell you—that he intended to prove me illegitimate, and my mother, my pure mother, an adulteress. He also dared to tell me that he had proof; that nothing could stop him, and that he would drag her name—the name that was dearer than life itself to me—through the filth of a public court. If you could have seen him triumphantly confident of victory, you could understand what followed. He seemed the arch-fiend himself, exulting over the downfall of the pure and holy. It was maddening. A fury of rage rushed through me, and mastered me. I seized the pistol and shot him—dead. That moment ruined my life.

"Would you, would *any* man, marry such a woman?"

WOULD ANY

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